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THE ABIDING MEMORY.

SERMONS

BY

RICHARD METCALF,

PASTOR OF THE WINCHESTER UNITARIAN SOCIETY
FROM 1866 TO 1881.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR.

BOSTON:

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MEMOIR.

RICHARD METCALF, son of Joel and Susannah (Houghton) Metcalf, was born in Providence, R.I., Aug. 19, 1829, the eighth in a family of eleven children. His father and grandfather were leather-dealers, and are remembered in Providence, according to the testimony of a friend, as "upright and honorable in their business relations, and always interested in the public weal." Providence was, at that time, a thriving young city, second among the New England communities in point of population, and hardly second to any in the United States in enterprise or comparative wealth; being quite as proud, indeed, of its mercantile fame as of the literary distinction given it by the presence, on one of its hill-tops, of Brown University, third oldest of New England colleges. Richard grew up in this thoroughly commercial atmosphere, receiving, in common with his brothers, such early education as would fit him for a business life, and leaving behind him, in the public schools through which he passed, the reputation of great studiousness and fidelity. In 1843, on the establishment of the Providence High School, he entered that school as one of its first members; and here his native thoughtfulness and seriousness of purpose gave him at once an exceptional position among his fellows. Although quiet and reserved in his bearing, and mingling but little in out-of-door sports, he yet won the confidence of both teachers and

scholars by the strength and beauty of his character ; while, at the same time, his singular conscientiousness and power of mental concentration, which stood him in stead of brilliant intellectual gifts, enabled him easily to distance all competitors in scholarship. Those who were fortunate enough to be his companions remember still the impression made upon them in their school-boy days by his indefatigable devotion. There was no one thing which he did best, as with one who has some single pre-eminent taste or gift ; he did everything better than others could do it, and one thing, to all appearance, as well as another. There was something as inevitable in his scholarship as in the succession of the seasons. He was the only one, as his companions will testify, of whom it could be positively predicted in advance that any given task would be performed as well as it possibly could be performed. He could no more falter in his industry, or grow weary in his application, or trip in his memory, than he could be surprised into an untruthful or ungenerous act.

When two-thirds through his high-school course, he made up his mind, somewhat suddenly, to enter college and prepare himself for a professional career. Hardly more than a year remained for going over the ground required in the classics, for entering with his class ; but so well was that brief time spent that he passed the examinations with the highest honors, and also competed for the two classical prizes offered to the entering class, winning the first prize both in Latin and in Greek. With this somewhat startling and at that time almost unexampled success, he entered Brown University in 1847.

His course through college, as his classmates testify, was quite in keeping with this exceptional beginning. He took the highest rank, among unusually able competitors, from the very beginning. He was not only first in his class throughout, but was first in each separate study. His work in the classics, in mathematics, in history, in philosophy, was as high as the best scholars are commonly able to attain in either one of these departments alone. And in each branch, it was the thorough and intelligent work of a scholar appreciating his task, and determined to leave no single problem unsolved. In college as in school, he carried industry and application to the point of genius; and to such genius, as he proved, nothing is impossible. In college as in school also, his moral standard was as high as his intellectual. Seldom met in college festivities, and with no taste nor aptitude for athletic sports, he was always seen at religious gatherings; and, in such cases as arose of rebellion against college authority, he was invariably found on the side of obedience and punctilious fidelity. Instances are told of what seemed to his companions a needlessly fastidious and heroic sense of duty; as where the entire class had risen in youthful indignation against some fancied injustice, or had agreed together to meet some unpopular instructor's questions in dogged silence, but where Metcalf pursued his own unruffled course, in a minority of one. It speaks well for the genuineness of his character that, even in these extreme cases, his sincerity was never questioned; as it speaks well, too, for his religious traits that, in a college predominantly "evangelical" in its faith, and in which orthodox revivals and conversions

were then in vogue, his presence, after the first suspicions were over, was always welcome, and his spiritual purity freely recognized.

His college course thus bore witness to the traits which characterized him through life. No one claimed for him extraordinary mental gifts. More than one of his college companions whom he surpassed in rank, the world has recognized as fully his equals in intellectual and moral power. His exceptional position was owing to his unequalled capacity, half natural and half acquired, of using the best powers he had for even the smallest task which he undertook. Whatever was worth doing at all he thought worthy of the utmost strength and skill he could command. In his intellectual as in his moral nature there seemed to be no waste material. He was one of the few persons in regard to whom it would have seemed impertinent, at any moment of his life, to speak of lost opportunities. In school and college, he learned the fine secret which he never afterward forgot, of making his natural powers tell, on every occasion, for all that they were worth.

He graduated from Brown University in 1851, delivering the valedictory addresses at Commencement, with an oration on "The True Fruits of Scholarship." That the college fully appreciated his worth is proved by the fact, well understood at the time, that an important place among the offices of instruction was offered him on graduating, the acceptance of which would have probably led to a permanent professorship. The invitation was of course a highly honorable and tempting one; but he had already determined upon his call-

ing, and did not allow himself to be turned aside by the attractions of an academic position. In the profession of the ministry, he saw a field of labor more congenial, because bearing more directly upon man's moral welfare, than any which even his own college could offer.

In 1851, the year of his graduation, he entered the Cambridge Divinity School. Here he soon distinguished himself by the same quiet persistency, the same tireless industry, and the same single-minded devotion to his studies, which had marked his college course. He gave himself exclusively to practical preparation for the Christian ministry, taking little part either in the theological speculations or in the political agitations which were then disturbing New England communities and New England churches. Those were days when the Fugitive Slave Law was carried into execution, by the aid of United States troops, in the streets of Boston, and when the rising spirit of religious radicalism was asserting itself in unmistakable terms in the Cambridge Divinity School, and especially in the class to which our friend belonged. Through all this, however, apparently without forfeiting respect, he kept the calmness of his middle course, making no terms with the extremists of either side. If this attitude seems at first to argue either a lack of youthful enthusiasm or undue precocity of judgment, it should be said that to him the middle course was always the natural course. He did not choose it, rather he found himself always there. He was never stirred to passionate advocacy or hostility, and never tempted to extremes. Generous in his judgments, tol-

erant of all diversities of belief, liberal in his construction of all the old doctrines, he instinctively found his own path, as youth and as man, midway between the old truths and the new.

Graduating from the Divinity School in 1854, he took charge at once of the young and struggling society of Bath, Maine. The work was precisely of the kind to interest him, and the zeal and practical aptitude with which he entered upon it proved at once how well he had chosen his calling. At his coming, as we are told by those who were with him then, Church and Sunday-school woke to new life, and the little parish found itself filled with fresh religious activity. Devout, earnest, full of interest in old and young, winning attention by the marked sincerity of his preaching, and guiding his people in the ways of a practical Christian activity, the young pastor seemed to be entering upon a career of the highest promise both for himself and for his parish.

Hardly was this good work begun, however, when it was suddenly and sadly arrested. Mr. Metcalf's constitution was always delicate; nor had it been fortified, as we have seen, by any out-of-door pursuits, even in his childhood. His incessant application to study had aroused the anxiety of his friends, even while he was in college; and, at his graduation, they had urged him to take a period of rest before beginning his professional studies. In Cambridge, his studies had been as unremitting as before; and, while in the Divinity School, he had received the first warnings of a serious disease which was to pursue him through life, and which immediately after his entrance upon his pastoral duties

assumed a more pronounced and threatening form. In April, 1857, he was obliged to resign his pulpit in Bath, to abandon his profession for an indefinite period, and return to his home in Providence for rest.

No one will ever know the bitterness of this first disappointment, with all that it then seemed to involve. It meant, at least, the surrender of a position which he had already made a post of the highest activity and usefulness; it meant possibly the withdrawal from a profession to which he had looked forward for years, just as he had reached its threshold, and had proved his singular fitness for it. From him, however, no words of complaint were heard. Resigning himself to his enforced inaction as best he could, he looked about him for such opportunities of usefulness as lay close at hand. While still in college, he had interested himself greatly, and had been of much service, in the ministry at large, which had just been started in Providence under the charge of our two Unitarian parishes. It was in the little mission chapel belonging to this ministry that he had first connected himself as a communicant with the Church; preferring to identify himself with its humbler fellowship rather than with that of the more conspicuous society in which he had been reared, and whose services he continued to attend. Here he now found useful employment once more, so far as his strength allowed, preaching from time to time to prove whether he might resume his active work again. One year of this interval* he spent in Detroit, Mich., taking charge of the Unitarian pulpit there during the pastor's absence, and winning for himself

* Dec. 5, 1858, to Nov. 20, 1859.

the attachment of the people almost as though he were their minister. It was in Detroit that he delivered, for the first time, the lectures afterward given in more elaborate form in Winchester, and published under the well-known title of *Letter and Spirit*; a volume to which so many of our young people have owed their first clear ideas of our Unitarian faith.

A year later, he was ready, or thought himself so, to take charge of a parish again, and was called to Meadville, Pa., where he was settled Jan. 30, 1860. Many are the testimonials, not only from the permanent congregation in this place, but also from the teachers and students of the Meadville Theological School, as to the impression left by his brief five years' ministry there. A letter from one who, as head of the Theological School, had reason to judge the pulpit ministrations of the place by an exacting standard, after expressing the greatest interest in the man himself and admiration of his powers, uses the following language: "Mr. Metcalf was not a sensational preacher, nor a sensational minister in any sense. Nothing was more characteristic of him than entire simplicity and seriousness. The sole purpose of his ministry seemed to be to impress upon men the serious side of life. It was not to be eloquent, though he was eloquent. It was not to show himself learned, though he was learned, so far as his imperfect health would allow. He was learned in the best things, and was always adding to his treasure. In the pulpit, his manner greatly enforced the views he presented, through the intensity of conviction which pervaded his services from beginning to end, and came in aid of his clear and

logical statement and beautiful style. I came to look upon him as hardly surpassed in ability, propriety, and interest, by any preacher whom I statedly listened to; and my estimate of him in this respect has never changed. He used, on proper occasions, to vindicate the body of opinions with which he was in sympathy; but, mostly, he dealt with universal truths, and spoke of those great universal needs of life which are recognized clearly by Christianity. His breadth as a thinker and scholar gained the attention of all who were willing to give him a hearing; and, while he held in the Divinity School no office of instruction, the character and example of such a man were of great special worth to the students who were preparing for the ministry. They appreciated it. They were drawn to him by his genial manners and spirit. They were favored by his counsel, sought in their difficulties and wants. And there was the daily life of the man,—struggling with bodily infirmity, devotedly following his profession under difficulties which made it sometimes seem impossible to continue in it,—as a constant study, a suggestion of wisdom, an inspiration, an example of all that they should propose to be.”*

It was during Mr. Metcalf's stay at Meadville, Aug. 19, 1861, that his marriage to Miss Sarah Perley Loring of Concord, Mass., took place; a happy connection, which was broken by her death, after a lingering illness, in October, 1867. In 1865, his Meadville ministry, so delightfully portrayed in the words just quoted, was abruptly terminated by renewed ill health; and Mr. Metcalf, disappointed once more, was forced to

* Letter from Rev. Oliver Stearns, D.D.

take refuge again in Providence. Disappointed indeed, yet not disheartened, even by this second defeat of his hopes. It was not in him to be disheartened, or ever to claim the world's sympathy in his misfortunes. Each new discouragement only brought out the more clearly the innate serenity and cheerfulness of his nature. His disposition was a thoroughly happy one. Whatever strength he had was at the service of his fellows in his chosen field, and to be driven from one post of action was to wait calmly and hopefully for strength to enter another. His trials and sufferings were his own, hardly known even to his most intimate friends, except as they noted from time to time a deeper tone and coloring in his pulpit ministrations. While he waited and wrestled, hardly daring to look into the future, his words took to themselves a growing persuasiveness and power. Some of the finest tributes that have been paid to the beauty and strength of his spiritual nature have come not from those who knew, through personal intimacy, the story of his life, but from strangers who have listened simply to his preaching, and found themselves, quite unbidden, looking into the depths of a soul manifestly chastened by spiritual struggle and victory.

Soon after his retirement from Meadville, the Unitarian Society at Winchester, Mass., was formed; and among the first preachers to whom they listened was Mr. Metcalf. It needed but a brief engagement to convince them that here was just the pastor they needed; and, fortunately, his health and eye-sight, which had both failed him in Meadville, had become by this time sufficiently restored to justify him in undertaking the

building up of a new parish. He was installed at Winchester, June 14, 1866.

A happier union between pastor and people, based on a more entire mutual appreciation and sympathy, was rarely formed. On the one hand, a young society, full of life and zeal, and eager for the best instruction; on the other, a minister of high aims and rare pastoral gifts, forbidden hitherto to engage in continuous service or follow out his ideals, but finding here at last his coveted opportunity. His old enemy, it is true, still pursued him. Full or robust health was a blessing this workman was never to know. Whatever he did must be done under restrictions which, to most professional men, would seem to make real work impossible. But, within the limits thus prescribed, he found room for a ministry of the noblest sort, winning in one way what he lost in another, compelling the bodily infirmities which hampered his activity to augment and intensify his spiritual life.

His Winchester ministry is still so fresh, and its impressions so vivid and personal, that it is difficult to speak of it as a thing of the past. His new people soon discovered, what others had learned so often before, that here was one who did not know how to slight or underrate any work which he undertook, or even to prefer one portion of it to another. After fifteen years' intercourse, they find it difficult to say whether he excelled as pastor or as preacher; whether he came nearest to them in the pulpit or in their homes, in the Sunday-school, in the church, or in their social life. What his teachers and schoolmates had learned to admire in his earlier years showed itself now in still

more striking form. As in school or college, so now, the simple acceptance of a task, great or small, was a pledge to himself that he would give to that task the best powers which he had. The mere assumption of an obligation constituted a claim upon him for his utmost endeavor. Despite physical infirmities, he was sure to be always found at his best.

As a pastor, his best qualities came into play. He entered personally into all the interests of his parishioners, bringing out their best traits and their full working strength. He possessed in full measure the delicacy and tact which know instinctively how to avoid antagonisms and to recognize varied characters and tasks, and also the homely common sense whose presence we so rarely note, yet whose absence is so disastrous. Into the daily life of his people he entered freely, making their cares and sorrows his own. He knew how to win the sympathy of old and young; he understood the fine art of inviting confidence by freely giving it; he knew how to lead others to trust in him by his simple trust and faith in them. Young people were drawn to him by his ready sympathy in all their feelings as well as by his power of winning their attention to his pleasant or serious talk. In his own family, he had great reputation as a story-teller, relating common incidents in a quiet but effective way, and entering so heartily into the tale himself as to infect all others by his own enjoyment of it. In his Sunday-school, he turned the same gift to higher account, writing for the children many admirable stories as charming in form as they were pointed in their moral application.

The best testimony as to his success in all pastoral relations comes from his parishioners in his several parishes, one of whom writes as follows: "His sympathies were both quick and wide, so that he understood a great range of character, and more by intuition than by studied observation. And he knew it sympathetically rather than cynically, though his perception of the ludicrous was wonderfully quick, as was his enjoyment of it. But his deep sympathy and great-heartedness prevented his ever making a laughing-stock of the foibles of any one. Join to this his remarkable tact, and his capacity of always saying the right thing or rather perhaps of never saying the wrong one, and you have the secret of his success in touching everybody at the best point of his character. He saw everything, outward and inward; and we knew that nothing, good or bad, in books, in work, in conduct, in character, escaped his sight. He was a happy man, and enjoyed many things with keen relish: fun, provided it was clean and kindly; social life in its whole range from high to low and old to young; nature, literature, the drama, singing. He was non-partisan, even judicial, in his views of men and things, and thus fell into no squabbles and had nothing to take back or explain. Strife he abhorred; but he had always the courage of his opinions, and could administer a rebuke when the occasion called for it. . . . No evil report or ill-natured remark or bit of gossip which reached him ever got farther. It died there. The knowledge of such a character and the admiration for it could not be confined to his parish, but gradually spread through the town, till he had the respect and confidence of all denomina-

tions to an extent scarcely accorded to any other citizen. His large and loving sympathy and unfailing tact made his ministrations peculiarly welcome at funerals, where he seemed to bring with him divine peace and trust ; so that the bereaved of other communions sought, in the absence of their own pastor, the services of Mr. Metcalf, rather than those of ministers with whose theology they ordinarily held themselves to be more in sympathy, thus paying an exquisite tribute to the faith which his life and character perpetually illustrated."

Of his excellence as a preacher, it is pleasant to speak, as it was won by none of the arts by which pulpit eminence is so often gained. He sought no publicity. He owed nothing to newspaper notoriety. His tastes no less than the condition of his health led him to devote himself almost exclusively to his parish, so that few among our better preachers were less generally known than he. His best utterances were for his people alone ; suggested by their needs, adapted to their peculiar wants, interpreting the highest truths into the common language of their daily thought. His preaching was in the best sense practical. The philosophical or theological discussions of the day had little charm for him as themes for pulpit discourse. Acquainting himself with their general results, accepting with a scholar's readiness such conclusions as commended themselves to him, he cared for them chiefly as throwing new light on the actual needs of the soul or the perplexities of every-day life. The partisan controversies of the day, in Church or State, concerned him but little. Never eager for novelty, while clinging with conservative instinct to his earlier faith, he had

the largest tolerance for opposing views or independent convictions, and felt no fear whatever of the speculations or discoveries of the age. Leaving others to follow out the critical researches of the hour, he was content to be a preacher to the heart, the conscience, the soul.

To characterize his preaching as pre-eminently practical and religious, however, is far from denying it literary or intellectual excellence. The supreme gift of simplicity and purity of style he possessed in unusual perfection. He was accustomed, as one of his college classmates said of him, to use the English language, not to display his skill in handling it or to show his command of its resources, but simply to express what he had to say in the clearest possible manner. To this, he added an aptness of familiar illustration and a directness of personal appeal, enhanced by the single purpose of helping those whom he addressed, which gave his words a searching power from which few of his hearers could escape. His discourses are valuable as showing that the most thorough mental training, the choicest literary gifts, the finest insight into character, and the profoundest spiritual experience, are not thrown away upon purely practical preaching, but only serve to make it worthy of the name.

Of his home life, we can only speak to allude to the great happiness and strength which he always found in it, and to refer briefly to his second marriage, which took place in Winchester, Sept. 29, 1870. He was married to Miss Ellen Eugenia Morse, of Winchester, from whom, during the remainder of his life, he received unfailing sympathy in his professional interests and valuable help in his parish work.

The delicacy of Mr. Metcalf's health and the disease which had followed him from his early youth, have already been referred to. In the spring of 1881, he was attacked, while preaching, by a sudden spasmodic cough, which never afterward left him, and which was accompanied by a slow failure of appetite and strength. His society at once offered him a vacation; and he spent the month of April at the South, returning early in May, but slightly recruited, though able to preach for several Sundays more. On Thursday, June 9, he attended the fifteenth anniversary of his settlement in Winchester, a day which was observed by the parish every year as its best and dearest festival. After this, he preached but twice, June 12 and June 19, returning from church on this last occasion never to leave his home again.

Sunday, June 26, had been appointed as the day for the annual christening service; and twelve children were to have been brought to him for baptism. "It was a service," writes a friend, "that he delighted in, and to which he looked forward with eagerness. He loved to have the font made beautiful with flowers and ferns, and bright with living water rising in a jet in the middle of the basin. He always had a separate blessing for each little head, and put a flower into each little hand; and, while the service was as far as possible from having any flavor of mysticism, it was made impressive and symbolic, and a consecration for parents as well as for the child."

On Tuesday, June 28, the Alumni of the Cambridge Divinity School, before whom he was to deliver the annual address, received the sad tidings that he

could not be present to speak to them, but that his address, the last words his brethren would receive from him, must be read by another.

Meantime, the fatal symptoms of his disease were showing themselves more unmistakably day by day. From the moment of reaching his home after his last Sunday's service, he was confined to his room by an intense headache and by increasing feebleness, which left his friends no room for hope. By Tuesday, June 28, it was plain that the end was near. Through Wednesday night, life was slowly ebbing; and on Thursday morning, June 30, at daybreak, he passed quietly away, and his beautiful earthly ministry was ended.

E. H. H.

...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...
...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...
...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...

...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...

...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...

...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...

...the world is so small. The first but ... of ...

"Jacobson the son of Melchizedek who
made great sin".

I.

THE ABIDING MEMORY.

"For this Melchizedek abideth a priest continually."—HEBREWS
vii., 1-3.

"How WOULD you like to have your picture taken as you look now?" is the question sometimes asked of children who for the moment wear on their faces looks by which they would dislike to be known and remembered. And the question always makes one feel how greatly the passion which flushes the cheeks and curls the lips and darts out with fiery flashes from the eyes deforms and distorts the whole outward man, so that the truest likeness of him at that moment he would pronounce to be no true likeness at all. Even though painted with the camera by the truthful sunlight whose pencil never flatters and never lies, he would throw it to the earth, saying, "It is not I who am represented there, but the passion which for the moment dwelt within me." It is not every truthful picture of himself that a man dare look at in his thoughtful moods, and much less show openly to the world. The greater the truth at such moments, the greater the libel on our real inmost selves.

And, even where there is no such strong passion at work to flush up the cheeks or to rob them of color, what a serious thing it often seems to sit before the

photographer's camera and have any one of our ten thousand expressions fixed indelibly to be gazed at evermore! To choose the right dress and attitude, to summon up a look which is neither too silly nor too solemn, but just right, so that the whole picture shall look natural, and yet represent our very best nature,—that is what often causes a day to be wasted in securing a likeness which the sun spent only forty seconds in drawing. For it is not merely *a* truth respecting ourselves that we wish to have delineated for friends and strangers to gaze at, but the highest and best truth. Is there any one man or woman whose life is all so pure and noble that he would be willing to have any and every expression of his face fixed on the card or canvas for others to look at and wonder from what passion it sprang? I do not believe it. I think we should all shrink from the test.

Yet nature sometimes takes a whole city in this way, and preserves it just as it was at some special moment, for the far distant ages to look at. So it was nearly eighteen hundred years ago, when old Pompeii was shrouded in dust and ashes and hidden from the eyes of that old Roman world, only to be kept in fresh bright colors for our own times to see. At an hour when she looked not for it, almost in a moment, the stirring wheels of life were suddenly stopped in that great city, and all was still. The Roman soldier stood at his post, the fugitives never left their hiding-places, the houses, temples, baths, and markets, the pictures, statues, and all the ornaments, the warrior's weapons, and the playthings of the little child, the signs of honest industry and of dishonest luxury,—all remain as

they were, to tell this nineteenth century exactly how Pompeii looked in the first. She could not stop to put on any holiday expression by which she might wish to be known hereafter ; she could not hide her faults away in some dark corner, and leave her virtues simply to be discovered by the men of the future ; but just as she was then, for good or evil, for better or worse, she is to this day.

Now, what Vesuvius did for that one Italian city, History is ever doing for individuals. She is touching them with her magic wand at some moment of life which she chooses without consulting them, and transforming them, exactly as they are at that very instant, into imperishable forms more enduring than marble or brass. She never gives in bas-relief a representation of all the deeds a man may perform. She has no room for that, on the brazen doors or lofty columns of the temple which she is decorating ; but she takes one act as the type of the life, and hands this down to all coming generations, as her estimate of what that one career amounted to. " Thus statuesque is History," said Mr. Carroll Everett ; and he illustrated his meaning by referring to the very words I have taken as my text,— " This Melchizedek abideth a priest continually," which means that he abides so in the thoughts and memory of the world ; for history tells nothing of this Melchizedek except that, while king of Salem, and because king therefore a priest of God, he met Abraham returning from battle with his spoils, and, meeting him thus in the way, stretched forth his arms in priestly benediction and blessed him beneath the open heavens. Now, this old king of Salem must have had

his youth and manhood, his virtues and vices, his noble and his shameful deeds, like all the rest ; but history, passing by all these events and qualities, transfixes him, as he stands there with wide-spread arms blessing the Hebrew patriarch, and so to you and me and all the world, which knows the Bible story, he "abideth a priest continually." It is the only way in which we can possibly think of him.

Then, the Gospel tells us of Judas who must have had some good in his heart, or he would never have joined the Christian Church at the time he did, and some good in his head, or he would never have been appointed treasurer of the Church by one who knew what was in man, and some really attractive qualities, or he would not, out of the whole multitude that followed Jesus, have been called to the chosen band of twelve ; but history passes by this whole side of his character, and hands him down to all the generations that are to come as he appeared on that memorable night when he betrayed the Saviour. You and I can hardly think of him, therefore, or mention his name, without adding those gospel words,—“Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him” ; and thus to you and to me, and to all men, he “abideth a traitor continually.”

Nor is this any peculiarity of our sacred history. It is just as true of the common annals of the world, as will be seen, if I mention two men who lived at the same time, one hundred years ago. Very few men in the early period of the American Revolution fought more bravely, endured more heroically, or sacrificed more cheerfully for his country than Benedict Arnold ; but history ignores that whole early record, takes the

treasonable attempt to give up West Point to the enemy as the symbol of his life, and insists that this shall stand to posterity for the real Arnold. So that he also, like Judas, abideth a traitor continually. But, in that same age, she takes John Howard, whose eventful life, through many changes in public and private, stretched over more than threescore years, and, passing by all that he was as a boy, husband, and father, student, professional man, and politician, fixes her gaze and ours solely upon his zealous effort to bring about prison reforms; so that, in the minds of all of us, John Howard abides as the philanthropist continually. Scarcely a man in the world has any other thought than that connected with the name. "Thus statuesque is History."

But what history does for the famous ones of earth you yourself are doing for the humbler souls whose names she does not record. You look at their lives in their varied aspects, as they pass from childhood on, through the world to their journey's end, where they lay life's burden down, and, unconsciously for the most part, fix on some one scene which ever remains as your ideal of what the life really was. So one man whom you have known abides with you continually as the personification of honor, honesty, courage, or of a manly determination to do the right at any cost; while another's name comes up to your mind when some shameful vice is spoken of. You know well enough in neither case does the one trait of character represent his whole being; for the web of life has always the mixed thread of good and evil interwoven in it, but still the mind fixes on that one trait as a correct

exponent of the man. This, you say, is the vital germ, the others but the husk or shell that encases it; or this passion is the commander-in-chief of the soul, the others but subordinate officers. So, although the man's character is many-sided and many-hued, you point to one spot of glory or of shame, and declare that this shall be his distinctive mark now and through all the years that are to come.

When you think of those who have slipped away from your loving clasp, and gone into the heavens, do they not appear with some one form and with some one look which is almost invariably the same. And so it will be when you have gone from me, or I from you. The many details of thought, word, and deed will be forgotten, and we shall abide in each other's memory as — what?

Yes, as *what* shall we abide, in the record of the world or the memory of chosen friends? If history ever takes the trouble to carve a statue of us for the instruction of coming generations, what will she represent us as doing? If our friends hang one picture of us more than all others on the walls of their memory, what will it represent us as doing? For we cannot select the attitude in which we will be taken, as though we were in a photographer's room. We cannot keep back, as we might *there*, the thoughts and wishes of the early life, and summon some new look which we have copied for the moment from the hero or the saint; but, just as we are in our inmost souls, we shall abide continually in the unfading memory. And who can tell how much the coming year will decide what that picture shall be? Perhaps some word we are to speak

or some thought we are to think, or some patient endurance in the hours of our grief, is what will stand as the likeness of our very soul. For in some form, in some image, we must abide continually. And what shall the picture be?

When men are facing a great wrong, and straining every nerve, and risking every possession to overcome it, will they always imagine you as fighting on their side or as arrayed in the hostile ranks? When a great sorrow comes, and they recall your face, will it be full of comfort and strength like that of the "beloved disciple," and ever bring something of the peace which passeth understanding, like every glimpse we catch of the dear Saviour's image? When temptations assail them, and the soul wavers in its choice between evil and good, and stands long hesitating,—though it seem strange indeed that a human soul can thus waver, hesitate, as if it did not know that holiness alone has promise of the real blessings of the life which now is and of that which is to come,—will your image then, as it rises up before them, strengthen them for the right? O friends, in what form are you to abide continually in the minds of those you leave behind, when you pass away from mortal sight, and going through the deep valley climb the loftier heights beyond?

How it ought to be, we cannot fail to know, as we look at "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." He, the beloved Lord, abideth as a Saviour continually. He comes to us in the hour of our grief as one who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications to his Father and our Father, and was made perfect by learning obedience, through the things which

he suffered. So that he is able to comfort us. He comes in the hour of temptation, as one who can sympathize with our hardest struggles, in that he himself was tempted, and yet is fully able to succor those who are tempted now. There is nothing low, sensual, vicious, in which men engage, wherein the thought of Jesus' presence would not come as a sharp rebuke. There is nothing pure, noble, self-denying, where a thought of him would not bring encouragement and strength. And if we study his life with an open mind and loving heart, and try to make ours resemble it in all its springs of action, we shall be changed somewhat into his glorious image, and abide somewhat in his likeness. The influence which flows out from us will be Christ-like, however much it falls below his in degree. It will be one of the countless little streams which fill the great river of the water of life, that is sweeping with a mighty current through the world.

When we have gone from the dear ones of earth to the dear ones in heaven, our memory will abide here below, even as our spirit will above; but how? "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, abideth a priest continually"; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed the Saviour, abideth a traitor continually; and Aristides abideth the just, and John Howard, the philanthropist, continually. And may you and I abide as Christian disciples continually,—Christian disciples who in the days of strength did God's will with manly courage, and in the hours of sorrow suffered it to be done with childlike trust.

JAN. 2, 1870.

*the whole, these judgments of history are fair. Even partisans are in each
they only murmur. But history, forgets much. — Carlyle said Nature kindly
doesn't give you a chaff. But unfortunately there is a delay in the history
with it. Jesus v. Peter. Peter's a momentary observation. It's the real man that
gets photographed. — So the saint shall judge the world*

See A. L. H.

II.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN.

“All things to all men.”—I. COR. ix., 22.

A VERY good practice that seemed to be, as Paul used the words and applied them ; a very poor practice, one of the poorest of all, as many people use and apply them to-day. To become “all things to all men” is very noble and Christ-like, when it means that you detect whatever is good in even the worst human beings about you, and linking your heart to theirs at that point lead them on to something better still. To become “all things to all men” is very ignoble and un-Christ-like, when it means that you let your own evil desires respond in sympathy to theirs, and drag you down to deeper degradation still. The one is the Master’s spirit, which could so eat with publicans and sinners as never to encourage their misdeeds, but only to quicken their aspiration for something good ; so that, when he left them, they longed to eat with him again and forever in his Father’s kingdom : the other is the spirit of the prodigal son, who could eat with the same people, and become so like them in their worst condition, so low, unmanly, and shameful that he ended by despising himself, and could only cry out on his return home, “Father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son.” The one, therefore, is Christian tact, which,

joining the wisdom of the serpent with the purity of the dove, draws many souls to a better life without giving them just cause of offence; the other is unchristian weakness, which is laughed out of its principles, and follows a multitude to do evil, or at least stands silently by, consenting to a wicked deed.

Now, the first thing to be noticed, with reference to this subject, is that, strictly speaking, no one ever did, or can, become "*all things* to all men." Human nature is too different, as it is embodied in different people, for any two characters to coincide throughout their length and breadth; and, when they come in contact, it is only at a few points of their being, where they establish lines of communication between soul and soul, and the great difference between the true man and the false, or the strong and the weak, depends on which of these connecting lines they choose to open and maintain. For you will find one man—would that you could meet with only one!—who always connects himself with what is most prominent and powerful in the lives of others, however vicious, and lets his thoughts, feelings, and actions be drawn into the same channel, until in these respects he seems altogether such as they. Such a one often begins by hiding the virtues which might clash with his new companion's vices, and putting on the same filthy garments which they choose to wear. So, among the profane, he lays aside whatever was reverential in his speech, and no longer hallows the holy name; and, among the vulgar, he drops his old refinement and begins to indulge in coarse talk and filthy jesting; and, among the lying, he becomes an adept in equivocation, and wonders that he

was ever so particular as to insist that "yes" shall mean "yes," just that and nothing more, as if everything beyond came from evil, and led to greater evil still; and among those who hold any virtue in derision, and smile at the simplicity of men who try to make all things conform to perfect righteousness, he hides that virtue far away from sight, and laughs at it, with the meanest of them all, as if he had never claimed it for his own. He falls into sympathy and fellowship with the worst part of their being, and becomes vicious with the vicious, vile with the vile, as if it were a mark of gentlemanly courtesy, instead of being nothing more than the most unmanly weakness. If, indeed, there are any human creatures who make it the essential passport to their friendship that you shall become faulty as they are faulty, you will show yourselves their worst enemies by complying with those terms, and one of your own worst enemies too. They may flatter you for a time, because "you've given up your prejudices," they say, and "mingled with them like a man"; but by and by, when an evil life brings forth its fruit in misery, they will curse you to your face, as having encouraged and approved their misdeeds. Far better lead a solitary hermit's life than become evil with the evil, on the plea of becoming all things to all men.

To give up any real principle for the sake of having others like you or of living in harmony with them is not Christian tact, but rather sheer infidelity, of a kind far worse than any unbelief of the mind. Whoever is not worth taking into your friendship for what he really is, and is honestly trying to be, is not worth taking at all;

and the more he tries to hide his real self beneath a cloak, or to put on a mask which shall bring his outward appearance into some likeness of your own, the more worthless he becomes. The principle with which a man plays fast and loose, making it prominent to-day and putting it in the background to-morrow, advocating it very strongly here and keeping very reticent about it there, will soon cease to be any principle at all; and, by the time we get into the world's good graces in any such way, we shall not be fit for anybody's good graces at all. He who doesn't like me for what I truly am doesn't have any liking for *me*, but only for some image he has made and called by my name; and, if what he claims to like me for is so poor and low and mean that I pray God I may never have the least of it clinging to body, mind, or soul, how he does dishonor me by the very respect he seems to pay! And yet, if in some mistaken way of trying to be all things to all men, I hid my real character and let him suppose I wanted to be like him, then it was not *he*, but *I*, who committed the deed of shame and dishonored my own self. For no liking, no friendship, no love, no present influence in reforming human society or saving human souls, is worth the concealment of any Christian virtue; and, if any man is willing to be liked for what he is not rather than be accurately known for what he truly is, he is treading a dangerous path where many fall to utter ruin. And of one thing we may be sure: it is never right conduct at the beginning or good policy in the end to be vicious with the vicious, or to deny the virtues which we honestly revere in our hearts.

Therefore I repeat, that in all strictness of speech, one cannot by any possibility become *all things* to all men, or indeed to *any* man, however eagerly he may try; and, besides that, there is in human nature so much that is low, mean, degrading, so much that springs from iniquity and leads to iniquity, that there are many things he never *ought* to become to any living creature, however possible it may be. The Christian tact or wisdom which Paul claimed to have practised, and for which he asked the favorable judgment of the world, consisted in becoming, not *all things*, but the best thing to every human being. It searches through another's life, till it discovers what may perhaps be the only thoroughly good feature about it, and then shows such sympathy and fellowship for that one desire or practice as to make a man think more of it than ever before, and cherish it far more carefully, and give it more extended rule over his heart and actions. At that one point, which scarcely anybody else had found, the two who seem to be travelling on widely different paths are brought into contact. The prophet touches the outcast, and pours into his soul along that one line of communication so much of that helpfulness which can always pass from a living, loving man, even as virtue went out of Jesus when a sorrowing one touched him in the crowd, that he shall leave the old way and follow the prophet's steps toward greater heights of goodness.

Hence, what Paul really did was to go among the Jews, when that seemed to be the call of duty, and, among the poor, superficial, unspiritual things which met his eyes, to see what there was with which he

could claim kindred most heartily and sincerely, and then to lay hold of this and declare in most fraternal tones: "We are all brethren; for I, too, worship the God of our fathers, and cherish a faith in the immortal life. Let us start together, and go on to perfection." And, then, he would meet the Greeks,—in dress, speech, and all outward appearance, the opposite of the Jews. There were temples and idols, with strange rites which must have seemed to him quite unmeaning, and an impure mythology which must have read like a blaspheming of sacred beings and things; but he searched underneath all these outward things which he hated, until he found an underlying spirit of genuine worship, and, claiming kinship with that,—as a possessor of the same religious zeal,—he sought to lead them on to a truer knowledge and service of what they had been calling an Unknown God. He went among those who tried to observe in full the cumbersome ritual of Moses, and keep all the feast days and fast days, the holy times and places; and, irksome as it was to him, he could yet detect something good in the spirit which prompted it, and therefore feast and fast when they did, if they would accept it as a friendly courtesy, and would not demand or enforce it as an absolute duty. So he could go to those who had none of these ritual observances whatever and perhaps had never heard of Moses' name; and if he missed, as he doubtless did, forms and ceremonies which had always seemed to him helpful and sacred, he yet found quickening consciences and loving hearts, which warned men away from the very sins he hated, and made them aspire to the holiness he loved. Hence, in all the diversities of the

religious life, he could yet find at least one little spark of genuine heavenly fire, such as made his own heart all aglow with holy fervor; and his Christian tact or wisdom lay in fanning this spark into a brilliant, lasting flame.

I have read of a great city besieged by enemies who carried one line of defence after another, and finally captured all the forts, streets, and dwellings,—everything except the citadel itself, the strongest point of all. Then, after long and weary waiting, the relieving squadron appeared, and after many useless efforts established communication with the heroic band who still defended their post. Food and ammunition, men and weapons, were poured into the citadel to reinforce them; and, what was far better still, courage, confidence, and assurance of final success were poured in also, so that they were able to resist every attack, reconquer the old lines, and drive the besiegers away. And that all seems typical of what goes on in every human soul which is wisely approached by the Helper just as the time of utter ruin seems to have drawn nigh. For the soul also is defeated in many of its conflicts, and sees one of its strongholds after another captured by besetting sins. The old professions and principles seem no longer able to stay the invader's progress. Onward moves the long line of enemies, breaking down the barriers of habits, stirring up strong passions to rebellion, and occupying one after another the avenues of the soul. The desires grow more and more wayward, the paralyzed will is too feeble to offer much resistance, and the beclouded mind can no longer distinguish correctly between

things that differ. The end must come soon, and be ruinous in the extreme. But then, in the good providence of God, help is laid on one who is mighty to save. A friend or stranger comes, who sees the one point in all that nature which has not yet been conquered and overrun by the hostile forces. He recognizes it as still loyal to the true and right; and, through that one point, he pours in so much confidence, hope, and strength that the weak soul grows strong again, ever hoping for better things, and trusting in the certainty of final victory. Then, the old conflict is renewed with a far more cheerful courage; and the man strikes better and braver blows for the right, because he is not fighting alone and in a failing cause, but is daily reinforced by the sympathy and fellowship which reach him along this one line of communication that is still kept open with better things. He does not wish that any one should become *all things* to him, but only that he shall be helper in what is holiest and best.

There is scarcely any need of saying (indeed, there might be *no* need of saying, if each would only act in the wisest way he knows) that there are two radically different methods of dealing with sin and error. The first is to fix your gaze simply and solely on the evil, and bring yourself into direct antagonism with it, without recognizing the existence of any other part of the nature. Then, you will stand at a distance from it, for, of course, you will have no such sympathy with him as to go very near or take him by the hand, and pour in from all your batteries the hottest, deadliest shells of condemnation. You will vent all your wrath upon the offender, as if you hated both sin and sinner with a

perfect hatred, and exulted in the destruction that was sure to come if he did not speedily repent. You can pile up one opprobrious epithet after another upon him, heaping Ossa on Pelion, to crush him utterly beneath the weight of your reproaches, and to remind him that this is nothing to the crushing he will receive from those mills of the gods which grind late, but grind to powder. Fiercer, hotter, faster, your invectives may fall upon the erring, as though you held the place of Jupiter Tonans in the old mythology, and could hurl thunder-bolts at every form of wrong; but when you pause, wearied and breathless, and look around to see how many have been brought low by your exertions, you will see just a few whining and crawling because they are too weak to stand up for either their virtues or their vices, while all who have any real manhood left in them are drawn out against you more boldly than ever, and not giving place to you for a single hour. You can never gain admittance to human hearts by any such methods as that, or fill men with a love for the virtue you advocate or a hatred for the vice which you condemn. You will only repel and disgust them by assailing them more bitterly than they think they deserve; and, in the vehemence of their opposition, they take a still bolder stand against the right. Why, you can approach a compass with one end of your magnet, and send it whirling away from you as if you were the arch-fiend himself; and you can approach a vicious man with the wrong end of your nature, as if you would tear him to pieces in case he would not enter the kingdom of heaven, and, if by any such treatment you drive him to a new position, you may be sure

it will be farther away than ever from the standard of excellence which you set up. There have been children nagged and fretted into positive disobedience to parents, when a little loving patience would have won them from the evil; and there have been men and women who have rebelled so much at the injustice of the too great sinfulness laid to their charge that they have resisted their own inclination to go back to virtue's path.)

And the other method of rescuing a human soul from its sins is to search for whatever good it contains, and give it credit for that, and cherish it as the living germ of all future excellence. Then, you gain a lodgement in the human breast by claiming kinship with this best part of the character, and agree to be the closest of allies, warm and true, against every thing in the nature that is given up to evil. You are no longer fighting the whole man, but only the sinful part of him; and you are not fighting *that* by your own unaided powers, but are helped by this patriotic band of all that is good and right, and find that they are as anxious for success as you, and will put forth all their efforts to gain the supremacy over the evil which has been ruling the heart and the life.) Historians are constantly telling us that Rome, with her vast armies, never surpassed in discipline or strength, did not become the mistress of the world by any brute force alone. Seldom, if ever, did she attack a single tribe by her own unaided soldiers; for she had formed a rule, from which she rarely deviated, of forming an alliance with some faction of the enemy, some claimant for popular honors, before she made a declaration of

war. And he who would subdue a human soul, and bring it into subjection to the divine will, will find the same invaluable help, if he first rallies around his banner, and enlists in the same holy cause, whatever is truly divine in that soul.

(Not very long ago, ^a one of our well-known clergymen went to the South-west, where numerous lines of rail-roads were pushing their way toward Mexico and the Southern Pacific Coast, and found—somewhere in Arkansas, ~~I think~~—a most wonderful piece of road in a cañon too broad to be bridged and too hard to be cut out for the track. The road-bed was therefore virtually suspended from the top of the cañon by a method slow and perhaps dangerous in building, but perfectly safe when finished. The builders were somewhat rough in look and speech; and one of them led the clergyman to a somewhat elevated point, and showed him what he said “was the handsomest tree in the country three weeks ago,” for “we boys hung six horse thieves in a row on that one straight branch, and it was the prettiest sight you ever saw.” Well, those were the men, drinking, gambling, fighting, and swearing, who asked the minister to preach them a sermon, when he had seen the sights. And he preached it; and his first words were, “Well, boys, you’ve been doing a grand good work for God in putting down this piece of road.” That was a new idea to them; and they came up a little closer, and listened more attentively, as he went on to say that God had made this part of the earth very healthy, but no one had ever lived in it, because of the difficulty of getting in or out; and for the same reason, though God had made

it wonderfully beautiful, scarcely anybody had ever seen it; and so, too, though God had made it very fertile, and capable of feeding thousands of families, it did not as yet produce enough for one poor traveller; and now they, the workmen on that road, were carrying out God's plans concerning that part of the world, and doing his will as it never had been done there before. Whereat those rough men began to think their lives had a little more meaning and respectability than they supposed. But, then, the minister went on to suggest that, as they were on the Lord's side in *this* matter, so they should be in *others*. For, since they were working around that cañon, had they not done a great many things not on his side? And was it not a pity that men who had done so glorious a work for God, and had shown that they could be fellow-laborers with him, should be willing to do so many mean, disgusting things for the devil? And so the sermon came to an end, not by becoming "all things to all men,"—for he gave no sanction to what was low and vile,—not by standing across the cañon and bombarding them with the fiercest condemnation, but by coming close up to them, giving them credit for whatever good they had done, and urging them to do *all* things after the heavenly pattern. That was true Christian tact and wisdom: it was what Paul meant by the oft-quoted and oft-abused words of the text.

Nor do I know of any cases where this method of dealing with human souls cannot be followed,—to give them credit for what is really good, and ally yourself to that before beginning your assault on the rest of the nature. True, that implies that in spite of manifest

depravity some trace of goodness is left in the soul; for, if there is *not*, you have no materials to work with, and your efforts to lead him to a better life are all in vain. Unless there is a germ of goodness still abiding in him, your warnings and entreaties will be alike of no avail; and you would do well to save your strength and say first, instead of last: "There's no use in trying. Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone." There *is* use in trying. We'll *not* let him alone, whatever the idols he is worshipping. Always there is in the human breast an element of goodness, which is never completely banished or destroyed by his crimes. The life may be very full of shame and iniquity; the lips may frame constant lies and defile themselves with oaths; the feet may turn ever into forbidden paths, and go where it is filthiest and slimiest, and all that first meets your eyes in the conduct of life may seem utterly corrupt. But, in even the worst hour of this worst soul, there will be a holy of holies in the breast where the evil never enters; a holy of holies where a God-given spirit dwells, and protests against the sin which has gained dominion over the man. It cannot be bribed into silence, nor induced by any threats to withhold its condemnation of your course. When you have conquered all things else, you will be forced to admit that you have not conquered your inmost self; and in the hour of victory, when you are taking great credit to yourself for an unchristian battle you have won, you will know what it is to be ashamed. There will be a traitor in your breast,—a traitor, perhaps, to the sinful desires that are ruling you, but a loyal subject to God and your better nature,—which in the lull

of passion will lift up its voice with a threatening "Woe!" or the pitying cry of "Foolish, foolish man!" In some hour when you are off your guard, it will assert its heavenly origin, and make known to you, with authoritative voice, the laws of your Creator.

However treacherous, then, a man may be to God and himself, he cannot deliver his whole being completely over to sin; for, sooner or later, he finds that what there is divine in his nature has but retreated into some one stronghold, where it is ready to resist every assault, and to co-operate with every relieving force which God or man may send. Approach it boldly, then, and wisely, ye who are striving to save your fellows from the thralldom of any sin. Find out what there is good in it that will claim kinship with your own best desires, and will form a close alliance with you for mutual defence. Give each man credit for whatever excellence belongs to him, and see if, with that part of the nature on your side, you cannot reform the rest. For so it comes to pass that he who has been faithful over a few things gains a new-born confidence of becoming ruler over many things, and at last he enters into the joy of his Lord.

JUNE 5, 1881.

III.

THE SICK-BED THE LORD'S BED.

“Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”—Ps. xli., 3.

THE hardest of all words for a preacher to define is the one most often used,—“God.” However fluent he may be in his speech, with words flowing out of his mouth in steady stream, as if from an unfailing fountain, he stops and stammers, when suddenly asked, “Who is God, and what?” Not that he has been using words unmeaningly or has testified to what he has not known, but that the thought is far too great for any words to express. Put all the perfections together that you have seen, and add all you ever dreamed of, all the power and goodness, the mercy and love, and suppose them all united into one personality, with one consciousness and will, and still you have shown forth but a part of what is embraced in our conception of God. Yet, if it is so hard for *us*, in this late day of the world, to find means of telling another what this word stands for in our minds, what wonder that, in the infancy of our race, men made but rude pencil sketches of the Almighty!

But, if you turn to the early records of the Bible, and note to what earthly things he was compared, you find them succeeding oftentimes better than we. For they dared use familiar terms which, though homely

enough, were on that very account truthful and expressive. They called him a *king*, because he gave the law of rectitude; a *judge*, who decided on the guilt incurred by every violation of this law; a *shepherd*, who led his flock to green pastures and beside still waters; a *farmer*, who hedged in the orchard where he planted men as trees; an *armor-bearer*, who covered them with his shield when the hostile darts flew thick and fast; an *archer*, who shot forth his arrows with unerring aim, when he would bring vice and iniquity to the ground; and a *dragoon* mounted on war-horse, and armed with sword and lance, when he rushed forward to rout the hosts of oppression. They named him a *rock*, on whose top they could climb above the highest wave of the sea of trouble; a *dwelling*, which sheltered them from scorching sunshine and chilling storm; and a *tower of defence*, when the alarm for danger sounded. A *brooding eagle* they ventured to name him, who fluttered over his young to feed and shelter them; a *lamplighter* they said he was, to whom David cried out, "Thou wilt light my candle, Lord"; and then, strangest comparison of all, so daring and yet so quaint, they call him the *bed-maker* for his children, saying, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Note, "*All his bed*," writes an old English commentator,— "pillow, bolster, sides, head and all."

Yet this childish simplicity of theirs was, in very truth, a divine wisdom. It made God very near and very dear. In nature and art, peace and war, field and shop, street and home, men were taught to feel his presence. When the white cloak of winter fell around them, they said, "He giveth snow like wool."

When the fierce storms burst over their heads, they believed "he maketh the winds his messengers and the flaming lightning his ministers." Daily work was done all the more faithfully from a conviction that, unless the Lord build the house, they labored in vain that build it; and, on shipboard, the anthem of rejoicing was, "He bringeth them to their desired haven." This every-day talk about God had no flavor of irreverence in it. Its familiarity was not of the kind to breed contempt. It did not make sacred things profane, but all things sacred. It levelled up, not down; and, without dwarfing the Creator, made creation the nobler for his contact with it. It was in very truth but the loving talk of children paying, as they thought, a grateful tribute to the Lord, by declaring that he fed them with angel's food, washed them clean from their impurities, lit their candles, and made up their bed.

Least of all would I smile at this last expression, save as a mother smiles joyfully at the child's attempt to tell how much he loves her,—how many bushels or how many pounds. For, indeed, when you stop to think of it, this seems one of the tenderest of all the praises uttered to the Lord. 'Tis no slight thing to make up the bed in sickness. So few can do it for us! Here and there, God sends a good nurse into the world, who has the quick eye and soft touch that are needed. Not for the pay which she earns ten times over, but for real sympathy and love, she ministers to the suffering, and out of a full heart and wise head finds means to give to "our beloved sleep." No priestess who serves at the altar or announces the oracles of the Most High has a holier mission than she or can more truly feel

that she is doing a divine work. Are they not all ministering spirits,—all that noble band of women whom Heaven has ordained to the service of sorrow in the chambers of the sick? God bless the nurses, even as they bless all the children of God!

Yet it is chiefly the loving mother who must make up the bed for the sick child. Hers are the hands that can smooth the clothes, adjust the pillows, and give the soothing touch to the forehead. Dear child! It used to throw itself down anywhere and anyhow, dressed or undressed, in bed or on it, on kitchen floor or parlor carpet, on sofa or in chair or just on the wagon-seat as it jolted along over the rough, stony road; and sleep came to him at once,—sweet sleep from which he woke refreshed, sound sleep which the pealing thunder did not break. But, now, the bed is too soft or too hard; the pillow too high or too low; the room too dark or too light; and the sick one too warm or too cool, as he tosses about, crying for the repose which will not come. Then, 'tis the mother's love which hushes the little sufferer, and makes him a bed in sickness where sleep, however unwilling, must visit him at last. And who can look on such a sight without feeling what a poet has put into words?—

“Yes, earth *has* angels, though their forms are moulded

But of such clay as fashions all below.

Though harps are wanting and bright pinions folded,

We know them by the love-light on their brow.

I have seen angels by the sick one's pillow:

Theirs was the soft touch and the soundless tread;

Where smitten hearts were drooping like the willow,

They stood between the weeping and the dead.”

By the light of such a room as that, you can read with an understanding heart what the Hebrew Psalmist wrote, "Thou [Lord] wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

But what has He to do with making up the bed you lie on? Much in every way.

Partly, because the comfort of your sick-bed depends on your *memories*. Many a successful man, so called, passes a sleepless night because of thorny memories he cannot remove from his couch. No one can safely say, after any of his actions, "That deed is done, once for all; and there is an end of it." That *is not* the end of it. It is only hidden away in some part of his brain, whence it comes forth in nights of sickness, and passes in review before him. Then the whole affair is acted over again in pantomime; and what he gloried in at the moment of strong passion fills him with strange horror in the infirmities of disease. Young King Charles, bigoted and proud, laughed at the murder of his Huguenot subjects on the eve of St. Bartholomew, and joined in the massacre as he would a stag hunt. But sick King Charles was long after haunted by the undying echo of the shrieks and groans of that fearful night, and saw, with sleepless eyes, the ghostly forms of his bleeding victims, whom no priestly prayers could banish from his bed. You, perhaps, made money last week by taking advantage of another's ignorance of business, or, worse still, of his faith in you, and think of it to-day with pleasure. But the memory of it may prove a lump in your sick-bed, always getting under you, turn which way you will, and driving sleep from your eyes. Or your child may come off best at school

or in play, by some ungenerous conduct toward his mates, which he rather exults in at the moment of success; but, on some feverish night, he will fancy "a poor pillow is keeping him awake," when all the time it will be the remembrance of that ungenerous deed.

Happy they whose bed is made up of blessed memories; who review the closing day, and find nothing in it to blush for; whose wandering thoughts fly away to by-gone times, only to bring back sweetest honey from the flowers of upright purposes and holy deeds! We do not call these "ghosts," these smiling faces which hover round the sick-bed in pleasant reveries or dreams. "Angels" we name them,—these risen spirits of our former deeds that come back to bless us. They comfort us with the comfort we once gave others. They speak out words of gratitude for every good deed in the past, which even in the hour of anguish we stop to hear, and, hearing, find our peace once more. And as, in that beautiful engraving you have seen, St. Catherine is borne away to heaven on the supporting bodies of the angels whom the Lord sent to bring her to himself, so he will make up for you a bed out of the memory of all the deeds you have done in love to God and man. Fuller tells us that, way back in the Dark Ages, the Emperor Charles and the first Christian Duke of Saxony built a city on the river Wesel. Minden they called it, or rather "Mine-thine," as being raised by their united efforts. And every soul which has lived as it should in health can name its sick-bed "Minden,"—*mine*, O Lord, and *thine*,—because of the happy memories which heaven sends down to cool the feverish pulse and drive away the racking pain.

Then, closely connected with all this, the comfort of your sick-bed will depend upon your *conscience*. In the busy life of health and strength, conscience gradually ceases to trouble a man, after being disregarded for a while. It gets "hardened" by usage. You might as well imagine a farmer's hands to get blistered every day he used the hoe or rake as to think that an old offender against the law is tormented by his conscience all the time. Why, the one blow you struck in anger troubles you more than Cæsar's million of dead soldiers troubled him. The one dollar you cheated a customer out of torments you worse than some men's thousands do them. People who have grown rich on the public money or trust funds they have misappropriated laugh at your idea of their being very unhappy in the "marble halls" built with the reward of iniquity. The best men's consciences trouble them more than the worst, in the common course of events; since the Almighty seems to treat us as a man does two quarrelling boys in the streets,—punishing his own son and sending him home in sorrow and shame, but letting the other go without a word of rebuke. So Apollos wrote, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons."

But even such a man as that, so hardened that nothing seems to hurt him, so deeply versed in guilt that he does not know the meaning of shame, will find that the Lord will "make all his bed in his sickness." The Conscience which he thought was dead long ago, and buried in the grave of years, beneath the accumulated weight of sins, proves to have been only sleeping. She wakes from her long slumber, as the body tosses in

pain, and mutinies against the vices which once enslaved her. Yes: the tables are turned in sickness; and the once sleeping Conscience is not only wakeful herself, but keeps a man wakeful on his bed against his will. In his weakness, he must listen to her. No strength in that sick frame to thrust her out of sight, no busy tumult of life around to overpower her still small voice, no glaring pomp of the world to blot out by its brightness the flaming charges she writes against him on the walls. But as, while you are walking through the city at night, suddenly a flash of light crosses the street before you, and on the farthest wall you see in glaring colors some startling picture or equally startling words, so, in the sick-room, conscience, the stereopticon of the heart, flashes out the pictures which a man would give all his wealth to hide from, and the warnings which he cannot close his ears against. That banquet hall which lives in the pages of Daniel and on the canvas of Allston is but one, out of how many rooms, where sleepless eyes see a handwriting on the wall through the livelong night, saying: "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting."

Happy he who can lie upon a bed of sickness with the well-founded trust that he has a good conscience, void of offence toward God and man! All the monitions that come to him from the unseen are full of tender encouragement; and the handwriting on *his* walls is not the "Mene, tekel, upharsin," which frightened the drunken king, but the divine message which sustained the Apostle to the Gentiles,— "My grace is sufficient for thee." If *sleep* does not visit him then,

peace and joy at least will come, as he lies upon his bed meditating in the long night-watches. One of the honored saints of my youthful days (for what boy, whether Protestant or Catholic, does not have heroes and saints?) was that man who was asked on his bed of sickness "if he had made his peace with God," and gave the quick response, "I never had a quarrel with him." Truly, there is no horror about a sick-room like that, where the Lord makes up the bed for his loving child and smooths it with the testimony of a good conscience.

But, best of all, the sick-bed is the Lord's bed, because there, most often, we hold the closest communion with his spirit. True, that spirit is around us at all times, like the ocean of air we breathe, or the full sunshine that bathes us as we go out into the brightness of noon. But who has not found hot and stifling chambers which shut out the fresh air; and dark, gloomy chambers, though the blessed sunshine was all around and to be had for the asking? And so there are human souls, which indeed live and move and have their being in God, but miss all conscious communion with him. Noisy passions drown his gentle invitation, "Come to me." Glaring vices draw them—poor, fluttering moths that they are—to the burning flames of passion, and they fail to catch the soft, clear rays of reason's lamp which the heavenly Father lighted. Then, the communion which they would not seek in health comes unsought in sickness. For, as on that first Easter Sunday, when the doors of the upper chamber were shut, the beloved Master appeared in the midst of his disciples, so now the Holy

Spirit comes through the shut doors of the sick chamber. Then, blind eyes are opened to spiritual realities never before seen, deaf ears catch the words of heavenly love which before had been unheard, the most careless remember, the most thoughtless think, and many who had thrust the great problems of life completely out of sight take them up at last and learn their right solution.

Does it seem strange that even a dying-bed becomes soft and sweet, when the presence of this divine Comforter is felt? Surely, we have learned already another lesson so like unto this that we ought not to call it strange. "Home," we say, "is where the heart is." Only let two hearts be welded together by mutual love, and wherever they go, on sea or land, in forest or desert, in palace or hut, they carry their home with them. Be it but a rough wigwam of hemlock boughs, it is still so radiant with love and musical with joy as to be their type of heaven. Can human love make a heaven out of mountains and deserts, and shall not divine love be able to make a bed for you in sickness on which you can praise God, though in the midst of a thousand ills? Why, there were martyrs in the olden times whose bed was the rack of the Inquisition, and yet they looked up smilingly from it to their persecutors' faces and sang, "Glory to God." And others there were who were wrapped in sheets of flame; but beside them, in that fiery bed, they saw one in the likeness of the Son of Man, and, as they

... "thought upon their Saviour's cross
They learned to bear their own."

And there, too, was the first disciple who died for the Master, the martyr Stephen, whose mangled body sank to the earth beneath the stones which fell fast upon him from the angry mob, but his face was as it were the face of an angel, and "he fell asleep." Ah, friends, the divine love which cared for all these, will make up a bed for you also in sickness, where you can sweetly sleep until the night of grief and death is over. Then, at the last, you will wake from your slumbers to pass an endless day with Him in whose "presence is fullness of joy," at whose "right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

APRIL 7, 1872.

IV.

ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT.

“One shall be taken, and the other left.” — MATT. xxiv., 40.

“THAT’S the sorrow of it,” the human heart moans out at first. “If we could only go together, whether in the body or out of the body, on earth or in heaven, so that, when one is taken, the other should not be left, life would lose much of its bitterness, and death much of its fear.” And who can help being bowed with grief when two are in the same house, looking at each other with loving eyes, touching each other with loving hands, speaking to each other with loving lips, filling each other’s soul with light, warmth, and joy, and the dreaded moment comes when one is taken and the other left? Or two are travelling along the road, so closely side by side that they can instantly join hands in any time of need. Whoever stumbles, the other raises him; whichever desponds, the other cheers him; whichever grows weary of his load, the other helps him bear it. Smooth and bright is the path, as they go happily on in pleasant intercourse, until the dark cloud overshadows them; and, in the thickening gloom, one is taken and the other left. Or two are in the same field of labor, working for the same good cause. All their knowledge, strength, zeal, inspiration, become a com-

mon friend to enrich them both alike. Neither can for a moment lose all hope, while he sees his fellow-laborer toiling with might and main for the same great purpose. The days go swiftly by in cheerful activity, and the morrow is waited for with patient trust, until the sad hour of separation is struck, and one is taken and the other left. For to him who goes and him who stays, that is often the great sorrow of life and the great bitterness of death.

Yes, friends, "That is the sorrow of it," we say at first, but "That is the blessing of it," we say afterward. For, when we keep our gaze fixed for a while on human life, we see that religion, knowledge, civilization, progress, and worth of every description, depend on having one left when the other is taken. It is not a matter of faith merely, but of positive demonstration. It is not an ordering of events which we simply trust is beneficial, but one whose goodness we actually see. The holding of every inch of ground we have won from the domains of ignorance, error, superstition, or sin, depends upon it: so does the gaining of any new ground at the present.

Two sentinels are guarding the sleeping camp; and, though one is taken, the army sleeps on safely and undisturbed. Two pilots are steering the ship through narrow channels, among rocks and shoals, in the darkness of the night; and, though one is taken, the ship glides safely on without swerving from the appointed course, because the other is still left to hold the helm. Two earnest souls are ministering to the pressing wants of humanity. They have found out by patient search who are truly in need out of all that ask for aid,

what kind of help they require, and how it can be so given as not to carry any harm along with its good; and when at last, after long and faithful services, one is taken away, the hungry are still fed, the sick visited, the sorrowing comforted, and the erring reclaimed, because the other is left. That both should go together out of the camp, field, house, road, and pass forever from mortal sight, would bring incalculable loss to the world; and it is only by means of these separations that any one is left to "hold the fort," guard the camp, guide the ship, or do any needed work for the good of mankind.

It is too important a theme to be passed by before we have dwelt on it long enough to absorb all its truth into our being. Too often we look upon it merely as a matter of personal experience, and therefore fail to comprehend it rightly, since the feelings warp the judgment, and tears distort the mind or completely blind the eyes. We must look outside of ourselves, if we would see clearly, and find how the truth applies to human welfare on those broad fields where "mine" and "thine" are swallowed up in the all-embracing "ours." Then, we shall discover that one great secret of human progress is this gradual gliding of the generations past and present into each other, without any such break as would be produced by blotting out one and creating another. The only conceivable way of handing down knowledge from age to age is through the operation of this divine law, which separates the members of a community, and leaves some upon the earth when the others are transferred to unseen homes. Especially before the invention of printing did it need

this unbroken chain of living souls to hand down to the future everything worth preserving from the past ; to hand down the history and the laws, the legends and the songs, and everything by which yesterday can flow through to-day and benefit to-morrow. Only go back far enough in the life of any nation, and you come to the time when the voice of tradition alone bears testimony to the years gone by. And that one word "tradition" means that, in spite of all the changes produced upon the earth by death, some, who learned the story of the past from the lips of gray-haired sires, are gone to tell it to the little children who shall gather round them and ask for another tale of the olden times. No break occurred in this line of living souls by which the wisdom of the past was communicated to the future ; and each new generation starts in life with a rich inheritance, only because those who were bound together in the former generations by the ties of kindred, friendship, and love, did not go at the same moment to the spirit world.

Nor does that apply to the age of tradition merely ; for, with almost equal force, it can be said of all ages. Nowadays, indeed, we talk as if all our ideas were so carefully preserved in arts, science, and machinery, in books, monuments, and institutions, that they could never be lost, even if all the minds which hold them should pass out of being. But that is far from being true. The literature of to-day will speak in an unknown tongue to the next generation, unless some who are living now shall be alive then to interpret its essential meaning. Directly or indirectly, the printed word is transmuted into knowledge only through the

agency of the living voice; and, however broad and deep the stream of literature may be, there is still need of a parallel current of unbroken tradition, to bear down to future years the lessons we are learning to-day. Books, monuments, institutions, and everything of that nature, are good and useful, as long as no break occurs in this endless chain of living minds; but they would become utterly worthless in a moment, if, to save our hearts from the pangs of separation, the whole of us should be taken away at once, and a new race of men be created to people the earth. For, much as we shrink from those separations, they are still the only way that reason has discovered by which the experiences of the present can be made to relieve the wants of the future.

But there is little satisfaction in talking about the whole human race: the subject is too vast to be fully comprehended, and too vague to call forth our deepest sympathies. We must turn our gaze back again to the single family, and see the new proofs of its being a blessing that, when one member is taken, the other should be left. To see this the more clearly, we must take the marked instances, where the real family, which lives and moves before us, is most like the ideal family we have pictured to our minds. Such a family, we shall find, is bound together, not by domestic affections merely, but by all the virtue, wisdom, patriotism, humanity, and every good quality its members have in common. The parents have given the children something more than that peculiar cast of countenance by which they are recognized: they have given them a cast of mind too, by which they are often recognized

equally well. They have given them something more than the physical constitution which gives assurance of sound health: they have given a spiritual constitution likewise, which determines very much what fancied good they will try to gain in life, and how they will use it when gained. For there is a law of heredity, which visits the consequences of the father's virtues, and of the mother's too, upon the children unto the third and fourth, and who can tell how many generations? It is a divine law on which the whole progress of the race depends. It secures to us the good which former generations have gained, and enables us to start in life, not poor and helpless, as we otherwise should, but as "heirs of all the ages," rich in the glorious inheritance we have received. The habits of our ancestors affect our habits: their industry and perseverance, their patient thought and earnest search after truth, their honesty and courage, their purity of heart and conscientiousness of purpose, all tell upon and help make us what we are. Every lesson learned by the ancestors makes the learning of it more natural for us. Every good deed performed by the parents makes the doing of it come easier to the children; for it is not in body alone, but in mind and soul, that each generation is able to improve those which follow it.

Now, it is in accordance with this law of heredity, transmitting to the offspring the best powers of the parents, that the real family becomes more or less like the ideal family. Hence, when you study Roman history, you meet in almost every generation, from the beginning of the commonwealth to the end, a Brutus, Fabius, or Manlius, who loves his country more than

all things else, and is ready at any moment to die, if only Rome can live and prosper. So, too, in English history, the gradual rise of constitutional government is greatly due to certain families whose patents of nobility are written by the Almighty upon their hearts. Age after age, they have upheld the popular cause. No sooner has the father's voice been hushed in death than the son has taken up the watchword, and made it ring throughout the land; and, on his fall, *his* son also has shouted it forth for all the lovers of liberty to hear. It would be hard to count the long line of generations through which some of those old English families have upheld by purse and sword, heart and mind, in the face of all opposition, the privileges of the people.

And in our own land also, it is not uncommon to see the best family traits preserved through successive ages and giving new force to our old proverb, "Like father, like son," and to the old Hebrew saying, "As is the mother so is her daughter." Here, for example, you will find instances where parents, children, and children's children have for a century given to the Church some of the best service it ever received. As faithful ministers of the word, they have always advocated the cause of truth and righteousness, and by the manifestation of religion in their lives have commended it to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Here, too, you will find those merchant families which, whether in this generation or the last or the one which went before that, have bought and sold with spotless integrity, and have shown in all their dealings an honesty which is above all policy and all price.

Such families are the hope of the world. They

bequeath to the future the virtuous tendencies they inherit from the past ; while, in the present, they serve as leaven to leaven the whole community in which they dwell. It would be hard to overestimate the good influence they exert upon the human welfare to-day, and just as hard to overestimate the loss which would come to the world, if all the members of one such family should pass from earth at once. "If we could all go together!" is the sigh of the sorrowing heart ; but who does not see that the real hope of humanity lies in the divine law which ordains that, when one is taken, the other shall be left to speak the good words, do the good old work, and manifest the good old spirit.

Then, finally, there is a spiritual union, which is often closer than any blood relationship, and has more to do with the perpetuation of character. It was a voice from outside the family circle that roused the soul from its slumbers, and made it conscious of hopes, longings, and aspirations it never knew before. Instinctively, it rose up, as did the sleeping princess in the enchanted castle, and followed its deliverer forth, after the grand awakening, saying to him in the words of ancient Writ, "Whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." So there have been friends who have clung to each other with a love surpassing that of brothers, and there have been disciples who looked up to the Master who quickened their spirits with a reverential affection which the fathers in the flesh could not call forth. He who awakened their souls seemed the real life-giver, and they ask no higher

joy than to live forever in his presence and share in his companionship. The fervent prayer which rises from their souls is to "live with him and die with him," and they look forward with a shudder to the hour of separation as an hour of anguish which they cannot bear.

But he who is wiser than their prayers overrules their selfish grief, and brings about a higher good to the human race. Elisha, in spite of his bitter grief, stays behind when his master and friend, Elijah, has passed out of sight ; and, as he takes up the mantle of the departed, he takes up also his providential work of warning a corrupt court and comforting a troubled people. Righteousness was not left without an advocate as long as he remained ; and the humble servants of Jehovah knew they had a leader in whom they could trust.

Paul at one period of his life felt a strong desire to "depart and be with Christ." But that he should "abide in the flesh" seemed more needful for the sake of other people, and therefore he wrote, "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all." So, when Jesus was crucified, and submitted trustingly to his fate, because he felt it was expedient he should be taken away, it was not less expedient that Peter and John should be left to tell the story of what he (their master) did, and carry on the work which he began. What Jesus taught the apostles was committed by them to other faithful men ; and his religion kept living and growing, because some true hearts in every generation lived long enough after their teachers passed from sight to be the teachers of those who were coming for-

ward. For that is the great blessing of life, that, when one is taken, the other is left.

Yes, a blessing to them both. To him who goes, it is a comfort from the assurance that his life will not be in vain, but whatever in it was good and worthy will be taken up by the other and carried forward to full success. How can the master dread to depart, when his disciple is ready to take his place and go on with the same instructions in wisdom? How can the father fear to go, when the son will carry out his plans of honorable activity and keep the ancestral name unsullied? And you who are deeply interested in any good cause, how can you fear to let it go when the heavenly messenger summons you away, as long as your fellow-laborer will still remain to speak, act, and pray in its behalf.

To him who remains, this great law of earthly separation should bring not personal grief alone, but personal inspiration. For the advantage of it to humanity is that one is left; left to hand down the truth which the two had learned, to continue the work which the two had begun, to exemplify the spirit which the two had cherished, and perpetuate whatever good was in them both. Yes, and for a still holier purpose, it may be, one is left; to repair, as far as he can, the wrongs the other inflicted, and to atone for his errors, as far as one can atone for another. For every one owes something to this humanity from which he has received so much; and some souls feel that they must not die till they have paid up the debt of kindness, care, and love which a departed friend neglected to discharge. The very greatness of that love which makes the hour of

separation dark and painful gives rise to high, important duties, in doing the work which we think the purified spirits of our friends would wish to have done; and, when we have entered heartily into those duties, we shall begin to see that it was an infinite kindness which decreed that, when one was taken, the other should be left.

OCT. 15, 1876.

V.

HE WAS KNOWN OF THEM IN THE
BREAKING OF BREAD.

“He was known of them in the breaking of bread.”—LUKE xxiv., 35.

IS ANY incident in the life of Jesus more unexpected than this; that two of his friends, who had not seen him for some time, and therefore took him for a stranger, as they walked and talked along the way, finally recognized him by his breaking of bread, and giving it to them? You would scarcely have expected that they would have any such associations with him as to recognize him by his manner of bestowing hospitality, and you certainly would not have expected that the little incident would be placed on record to be known and read to the end of the world. For in whatever way we think of the Christ,—whether as the man of Nazareth, who has shown us how a son of man can be also a son of God; or as the great Teacher, whose words are full of spirit and life; or as the Deliverer, who helps us break from the bondage of evil habit and passion; or as the great Spiritual Leader of the world, who stands in the foremost ranks of humanity, and goes before us on the heavenward road that we may not miss the way; or, as I best love to think of him, as our Heavenly Brother, who keeps so close to us and to the Infinite One alike, that the more we love *him*,

the more we love his Father and our Father,—in whatever way we think of him, we should not expect to be told that those who could not in any other way make out who he was, knew him to be the very Christ of God by his manner of breaking and distributing bread. For my part, I should have looked for nothing like that. Had two men come to me and said: "We were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus one day, and a stranger overtook us and led us quickly into conversation on the holiest of all themes. Ere we were aware, we were talking of sacred things, such as we had scarcely dared put into words, and were catching glimpses of the length and breadth, the depth and height of the love of God; and we knew it was the Christ, because no other ever spoke like that," it would have seemed the most natural thing that could have happened. Or had they said that, as they walked along, "his wayside texts were flowers and birds" and all things beautiful in nature, so that they saw something divine in clouds, rocks, and trees, and felt that the grass of the field showed footprints of the Deity, and then it flashed upon them that they were talking with him who always heard divine anthems when lily bells were swinging, and caught some notes of God's praises when thrushes sang their sweetest song,—that would have been so like him, I could not have doubted their story. Or had they declared that, as the three journeyed along, they met some poor outcast whom all others had driven from sympathy and sight, and their companion had stopped all talk about the ancient Scriptures, and the ever-new revelation through the Spirit, and gone up to the wretched outcast to revive

his courage with cheering words, and show him how to find the long-lost way to peace, and then they knew him by his boundless tenderness to the least of these his brethren,—that, also, would have been just what was to be expected from him who would always leave the ninety-and-nine, and go in search of what was gone astray. But it is a most unlooked-for thing that the great Teacher, who was not recognized as he opened the Scriptures and talked of what holy men of old had written when moved by a holy spirit, should be known in the breaking of bread.

Yet, after all, do we not recognize human souls by some of these outward material things which seem to be far outside the soul, but are not in reality? One writes that his friend was ever to be remembered for his hospitality, which was so broad, so generous, so welcoming that he was to be known, like the Master, in the breaking of bread. Yet again you will hear, without any names being mentioned, of an acquaintance who has given liberally and cheerfully to relieve the distressed; and you know, without being told, who it was that shared his means with the needy, for you recognize him in the bestowal of charity. And as you visit homes of affliction and sorrow, and find traces of some one who has gone before you with a sympathizing heart, a look of deepest friendliness, and a grasp of the hand that speaks so much more clearly than words, what need of mentioning the name, when he becomes known to you through his personal presence in those dark and trying hours? So one is known by the readiness with which his house and grounds, his books and pictures, and all that he has secured to gratify his own

taste, become in some sense the heritage of friends and strangers, and foster in many souls a love for the beautiful and true; and yet another is recognized by the willingness to lay aside his work and listen to a long tale of misfortune, and to give the wisest of counsel, the most efficient of aid. For though these things are called very "material," they are "spiritual" as well, and their connection with human *bodies* is no more real, lasting, and necessary than with human *souls*. To be "known by the breaking of bread," that means to be known by the soul just as much as to be known by the preaching of a sermon or the offering of a prayer.

Hence, the very fact that most of us were somewhat surprised to learn that Jesus was ever recognized by anything so outward and trivial as giving bread to those who were at the table with him would seem to indicate that we were brought up with a one-sided view of Christianity. Had we taken up the Gospel as we would any other story, and read it simply and naturally, with wide-awake minds and vivid imaginations, we should have seen how largely it told of ministrations to the physical needs of man. We should have noticed from the very outset that sermons, prayers, and what is popularly called religious conversation, do not by any means fill these books from beginning to end; but all along with such teachings, there are constantly repeated tales of what he did for the poor and sorrowing, the blind, deaf, and palsied. You cannot strike these latter out, without destroying the whole continuity of the book, and making the Gospel, already so small, shrink greatly in size. So, if you were to tell some child the story of him who began life in a manger and ended it

on the cross, and to tell it, not just as it is laid down in most Sunday-school lessons, but as it lies in your own mind after all your studying and questioning and criticism, you would doubtless find yourself telling even more of what he did to make men's bodies healthier and happier than of what he did for their souls. So, when Mr. Abbott published his *Philochristus* a year or two ago, he brought out this humanity of Jesus, as it always must shine out in any true story of his life; and, when Mr. Clarke published his *Legend of Thomas Didymus* (which might be called the Gospel according to Thomas), the same side of the life was seen. All who were with him during the three short years of his ministry had, doubtless, many hallowed associations about his sermons and prayers, and could have told how inspiring they were at the time and how helpful to remember; but joined inseparably with these must have been other memories of friendly hands and generous gifts, when he was ministering to feeble bodies and sorrowing minds.

As for me, I am heartily glad that such incidents should be recorded on the New Testament pages. They make one feel that religion reaches from centre to circumference, and has to do with poverty and want, hunger and thirst, aching heads and trembling limbs, weak eyes and dull ears. It is concerned with "everything which concerns humanity"; and, taking men just where they are and as they are, it leads them upward and onward to what is better still. And, more than that, it makes one feel that the material blessings are gateways to the spiritual, and that, when you have given bread, you can all the more successfully give

sound doctrine and a hopeful faith. For there is one part of this walk to Emmaus which I have never seen alluded to, although it is by no means the least suggestive feature in it. Would it not have seemed much more natural, if those two disciples had said something like this to each other; "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked by the way, and opened unto us the Scriptures?" But did they not say something of the kind? Yes; but when? Most certainly not *while* he talked and explained the sacred books. They were probably in no condition for it then. They had been in Jerusalem, where their teacher and friend had been put to death. They had shared in the grief of Friday and Saturday, when the sorrow was still so fresh they could think and talk of nothing else. They had wandered about on Sunday morning, listening to the strange rumors that he was really alive, after all that had happened, and had been seen by some of their band; and then, ere they could satisfy themselves of the truth of these rumors, they started for home. If you ever had their experience, you can imagine how little food and sleep had been theirs during those three days, and with what heavy hearts and weary feet they drew near home at the approach of evening. They listened to wonderful things from their companion as they journeyed side by side; but their tired minds and sad hearts could not take the meaning in, until they all sat by the table and he broke a loaf of bread, with a word of blessing, and gave each of them a piece to refresh the body, and then at last they roused up, as out of a dull sleep, and knew him for what he really was. When they had finished eating, the scenes of their journey

came up vividly to mind ; and they remembered that their hearts had burned within them, as he explained what the holy ones had written. But they remembered nothing of the kind, *until he had become known to them by the breaking of bread.*

And just that story has been repeated time and again in the history of the Christian Church ; and, with a few changes of names, it applies to what goes on around us now. For you can go to some family in sorrow and trouble, and carry with you, as you think, the very life and blessedness of the gospel ; you can "open the Scriptures" as wisely and lovingly as is in the power of man, and tell of the highest and holiest things that have been revealed to your spirit in the hours of meditation ; and "their eyes may be holden," so that they shall see no token of the Christ in all you say or do. And, then, you shall sit by the sufferer's side to relieve some racking pain, or shall supply his table with food from your own, or shall bring the berries and grapes that shall tempt the failing appetite ; and, in some of those ways, there will come a revelation of your love and sympathy, which your words, loving and sympathetic as they were, did not give, and you will be known unto them through these gifts of friendship. And by and by, when the pain ceases and the sorrow is somewhat composed, they will say to each other, "Yes, and I remember now, what I could not seem to comprehend at the time, that my heart began to warm within me long ago, when he spoke to me of duty and destiny and what life ought to be." You will be known for a messenger of God, through the material blessings

you bestow in love ; and, lo ! from that very moment, memory will be all alive with the quickening thoughts and sacred precepts which at first seemed to be uttered in vain.

Hence, in this spirit, I conceive that a true Christian is to be known in the breaking and giving of bread, or rather, to be more exact, in the hospitality and charity, the sympathy and helpfulness, which that act well serves to represent. Not by any means that these are the *only* credentials to a high place in the world's esteem, not by any means that these should be its only gifts to men. There are many who already have bread enough and to spare, and who have learned that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. There are many who have a famine and a thirst ; not a famine of bread or thirst for water, but for hearing the truth of God. There is a hungering and thirsting for righteousness, which the Church must meet and gratify to make full proof of its divine origin. But, to go on and repeat that, simply that, nothing more, is merely to repeat what has been taught in the Church of all ages, and to leave out of sight what we are most in danger of forgetting. The Church must be known by its sermons and prayers, its Bible and tracts, and all its direct appeals to the religious sentiments ; but, besides all that, it must be known by every thing it does to feed and clothe, teach and refine, comfort and guide the race. For the aim of Christianity is not limited to preparation for any future state of being, however much that is included. It looks to the training up of each man, so that his earthly life may be worth living. It looks to the

formation of such private characters that, when "men die, and the race lives on," it shall live on all the better and nobler for those who are no more. It looks to see humanity gather into itself all that is good and great in each passing generation, and become perfected through the contributions of imperfect men. It must take in, therefore, appeals to other parts of the nature than the conscience, and must be known by what it does for the whole man.

And all this is more needful to remember, because each part of the life acts and reacts upon the rest. So far from Bibles and tracts being the only things for a church to give to humanity, they are not always even the first thing. There are times when something to eat is worth ten times as much to a man as anything to read; and the most gracious words you ever spoke are but idle breath, if food, money, or clothing has not gone before. There are human beings so pinched with want that all the sermons ever written could be of less value to them than a loaf of bread. With terrible hunger driving them almost to madness, with dire poverty threatening them with greater ills each coming day, with wife and children suffering for the common necessities of life, they cannot weigh the meaning or appreciate the beauty of words. Heart will not meet heart in such a case, till hand has touched the hand and delivered into its keeping what seems most needed for the welfare of the whole man. You remove the greatest of his temptations, when you remove his poverty. You prepare him for the strait gate of virtue, when he has entered on an honest living. You make him trust the infinite love of God,

when he has received practical experience of the tender love of man; and, because he is fed and clothed, he is "in his right mind," and able to see the way of duty, and follow it with all his heart. Then, the sacred words, which once seemed cold and unmeaning, shall find the soul all warm to receive them, and shall be as good seed dropping on good ground and bringing forth abundant fruit. Thus will the Church, like its Master, be known first in the bread, and then in the word.

And how shall it be with us, who for fifteen years have been wedded together as pastor and people, and organized into what we meant should be a church of the living God? We have never forgotten, and are not likely to at this late day, the cheerful worship and religious life which are rightfully expected from every band of Christians, unless they would have a name that they live, and yet be truly dead. But we cannot help feeling, what we did at the outset, that our chief outside work is the performance of social duties toward the children of God, whether they join in our worship or *any* worship or not. If men will not come to the church, the church, in the time of their needs, must go to them. It must carry in its hands the blessings they need for saving and helping their lives; bread for their hunger, work for their poverty, comfort for their sorrow, counsel and encouragement for all their doubts. "Man's extremity," which is "God's opportunity," according to the oft-quoted proverb, is "the Church's opportunity," too. Wherever there is sorrow, heart-ache, or wrong, it must go with its best words and gifts, and see what it can do to heal the

sorrow, right the wrong, and relieve the oppressed heart. "Secular work and secular preaching" it may be called by some; but that matters little, so long as it is in accord with Christ's work and his preaching. For the Church has to do with the town, since the more beautiful and prosperous that becomes, the fewer will be the temptations to evil. And the Church has to do with the country; and, on other occasions than memorial days, it must set forth the duties of each and all. And when the world presents a great problem, like that labor question, which is to vex the land more and more through coming years, the Church is to do all in its power to make both employers and employed obedient to the Golden Rule, and bent on doing all things as rendering service not to man alone, but God. In short, the Church must carry out, thoroughly and impartially, the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"; for never, until it does this, will it gain a full and candid hearing for that other commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength." It is in the human goodness shown the unfortunate that they get an intimation of the divine goodness. It is in the mercy, tenderness, and helpfulness of their fellows that they learn to trust the infinite tenderness of God. Because human hands have touched theirs so gently and lovingly, they begin at last to confide in that love of God which, though unseen, is eternal.

It was thoughts like these that came to me as I sat thinking what I should ask for the church and *from* the church at this anniversary season. I would have

you known for what you truly are, a church of the living God, by your fervent prayers, your earnest sermons, and your joyful hymns of praise. I would have you known by the comfort you have to offer, when you stand in the chamber of sickness or weep with those who weep by the new-made grave. I would have you known by your power to move human hearts and lead them, by a thorough consecration of the life, to the service of truth and righteousness. I would have you known by your eagerness to walk in purity of heart all the days of your life. But *that*, with which so many prayers for churches begin and end, is by no means all. Beyond that, I would have you known, like your heavenly brother, in the breaking of bread and all the grateful acts of hospitality and charity. I would have you known, as you have always been, by generous contributions to all who need your aid amid the calamities of life. I would have you known by your kindness, helpfulness, and thoughtfulness toward all who require your sympathy and counsel. And if you thus live out your Christianity, men and women will talk it over and begin to see its deepest spiritual truth; and whereas, at first, they knew you only in the breaking of bread, they will say to each other at last, "Did not our hearts burn within us, as he spoke in the way and opened unto us the Scriptures?"

JUNE 12, 1881.

VI.

THE ROAD TO SPIRITUAL CERTAINTIES.

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”—JOB xix., 25.

I TRUST we are all unselfish enough to be glad for him whose conviction of religious truth is so strong that he can repeat the words of the text with no secret doubts or half-formed questionings,—“I *know* that my Redeemer liveth.” At least, as we read the Book of Job, we must be glad that this old Chaldæan had a faith which amounted to certainty, and enabled him to make the declaration with all honesty of heart. For he was a man who, from the highest peak of prosperity, had been brought down to the lowest depths of adversity. Bereft in one day of his seven sons and three daughters, he found himself, all at once, lonely and childless, sick and suffering, poor and friendless, avoided by those who used to surround him, reproached by those who used to pay him respectful homage; and, when at last three old acquaintances *did* come to sit beside him, it was to taunt him with having practised some secret iniquities for which his sufferings were the open judgment of God. Then it was, when all earthly joy and comfort failed, that he could still look adversity squarely in the face, and declare with unfaltering tone: “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” and he will deliver

me from all these trials. "I know that my Vindicator liveth," and he will justify me at last, in the eyes of men and angels. What matters this overwhelming flood of troubles to-day? I know that "in my flesh," before I die, I shall see the presence and favor of God. Yes, I trust we are all unselfish enough to be glad for him whose belief was so clear and strong as to seem to him like positive knowledge.

And yet it is to be feared that, at the same time, we are sorry for *ourselves*, because our very truthfulness prevents our speaking with that certainty on many religious themes; and, instead of lifting up the head with Job's triumphant song, we timidly repeat the words of our own poet laureate:—

"Behold, we know not anything,—
We can but *trust*."

When a great misfortune bursts upon us, and we are swallowed up in the wreck of our earthly happiness, the *hope* of better things to come may still remain, but how seldom we can honestly say, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth"! When a great bereavement overtakes us, and "the light of our home goes out," how often, though the belief that "all is well" is strong within us, we find it hard to say, "We *know* we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens"! Yes, we cannot help feeling sad, when we see that some whose only refuge is in the eternal realities, are still feeling after God and trying to find him, but have not yet laid hold of the everlasting arms; and, hence, it is sometimes very discouraging to read Job's assurance of faith, when its chief effect is to bring before us our doubts and questionings, uncertainties and fears.

It would be a great mistake, however, to think of human beings as divided into two classes, completely and radically separated from each other, one of which is *certain* about religious truths, and the other *uncertain*. To do that, and rank yourself in the first class, would be very apt to nurture self-conceit; to do it, and rank yourself with the second, would be just as apt to make you despair of yourself. But no such utter separation exists. Each one of us belongs to both classes at times, and passes from the certain to the uncertain and back again, he scarcely knows when, why, or how. There are bright days of exaltation, when he seems to be lifted up to the very top of the mount of vision, and the grand realities of his life are spread out before him. Then, heaven seems to him very near, and earth becomes a holy of holies, wherein he can meet his Creator face to face. The path of duty lies plain before his sight; and he smiles to think how groundless were his old tormenting fears, now that with keener eyes he sees God's angels all along the road to keep him in all his ways. No work is too hard to undertake in that moment of exaltation, no burden too heavy to bear, no cup of grief so bitter that he cannot drink it, when the dear Father places it to his lips. But, even while thus

... "we can almost think we gaze
Through golden vistas into heaven,"

the gathering mists shut us in, and hide the vision from our eyes. The brightness fades from heaven, and the glory from earth. We look up, and there is only clouds and darkness; we look down, and there is only rocks and thorns; we look forward, and fail to discern

more than one step of the way. Back again come the doubts and fears from which we trusted we had been forever redeemed; and we begin to grope our way forward once more, feeling after something real, if, haply, we may find it. A sad experience, indeed, this coming down to the depths from the heights, but by no means peculiar to us. It is shared in by humanity, and has been the experience of the psalmists, prophets, and Christian heroes, at whose faith we have looked with wonder. They, too, looked one day through the parted clouds at the realities of heaven, and on the next found even earthly things wrapped in mystery, and hidden from their sight. For, I repeat, those who are *certain* about religious things and those who are *uncertain* do not form two utterly distinct classes; but each of us, at times, belongs to them both, and passes from one to the other and back again, he scarcely knows how, when, or where. And, if any of you to-day are so beclouded that you cannot say, "I see" or "I know," but can only feel after the divine realities, as a blind man groping along unfamiliar ways, you can take this for your comfort, that they who at last climbed the farthest, saw most clearly, and knew most surely, went down as far as you into the deep places of life, and walked as long as you amid doubts and fears. So shall you, like them, rise out of these troubles at last.

Yet when you have waded through one stream of doubt and reached the solid ground beyond, so that, as to this one truth, you will never doubt again, but will remain certain forever afterward, the same process has still to be repeated, no one can tell how often. Certainty on one point is by no means certainty on

all ; and, however gladly the soul which has succeeded in one of its researches cries out, "I see it all now," it is soon convinced that there are countless things it does not see or know. But this, likewise, ought not to trouble us, or lead to any despair. Duty is too vast to be learned in one lesson, God is too great to be measured by these finite minds. The more truth we master, the more we see to gain ; for all roads lead to infinite mystery. ¹ Ruskin lectures on a crystal of quartz, and leads you on step by step, without a break in the thought, until you are in the midst of the grandest truths of the spirit. Huxley takes up a piece of chalk to tell what it is and how it came into being ; and you follow the path of its development back through history, back through tradition, back through geologic eras, back through speculations of what *must* have been, back through dreams of what *might* have been, back till the mind can see no farther, and the weary thoughts stand still, and even then, when you can go no farther, the path still runs back, and is lost to sight in the infinite mysteries you have not yet penetrated. We sometimes say of our most noted scientists, "They know all about this world of ours." But that is the very thing they are most careful to deny. They do not "know *all* about it." On the contrary, some of the leading men of science have taken the name of "Agnostics," which means not only that they do not "know all about it," but also that no one ever did, will, or can "know *all* about it." From all their studies of earth and man, sea and sky, they come back with a simple message,—that they pushed their explorations to the border-land of mys-

tery, and they know not what lies beyond; nor will they examine farther, for they believe it is unknowable.

"Canst thou search out the deep things of God?
Canst thou reach the perfection of the Almighty?
'Tis high as heaven: what canst thou do?
Deeper than hell: what canst thou know?
The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea."

So these two elements, the certain and the uncertain, exist side by side in all religion. For, first, one must be sure of the ground on which he is standing, and know whereof he affirms; and, secondly, he must be aware that there are realms of mystery all around him which he has not yet fully explored. The God whom you could fully comprehend would be no infinite God at all; the divine perfections you could weigh and measure would no longer draw forth the deepest homage of your soul. Reverence and homage come from the presence of something too great to be grasped; and you bow before the Supreme Being with holy awe, because, when you have filled your little measures to the brim, you still have left untouched a whole ocean of power, love, and wisdom. It is when you are feeling after the unlearned and unattained that the religious feeling is deepest and strongest within you. And when do you think the man of Uz, who made the declaration of our text, bowed in the truest reverence, and came the closest to his God? Not when he looked his accusers in the face and hurled back their taunts and reproaches with his unfaltering words, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." Glad as we are that he had such a certainty to rest on, this was not the devoutest mo-

ment of his life. No, not then, but afterward, when out of a whirlwind the Lord spoke to his listening heart, and he heard of heights of knowledge he could not scale with his feet, and depths of wisdom he could not fathom with his plummet. All things in nature brought him into the midst of mysteries; and, however far he went, the infinite God was above, around, and beneath. It was then, when he bowed his head in deepest humility, that Job most truly dwelt in God and God in him.

That with all our religious certainties there are still great mysteries through which we must slowly and cautiously grope our way is the source of joy and hope to every thoughtful soul. It is only in our tired moments that we wish everything had been learned from beginning to end, and that not a single word of the Lord remained to be studied. We are glad the very next moment that there are new worlds to conquer, new truths to master, new heights of goodness to scale. The assurance of unending life would be only a curse, if there did not come with it the possibility of unending progress. How wretched we should be, if we could, as some fancy, exhaust the capabilities of life! The moment of doing that would be the right moment for dying at once and forever. Surely, it would be to every one of us the most unspeakable form of misery to find that our existence was but a *cul-de-sac*, a blind alley, which brought us to an adamant barrier, where Nature had written: "No thoroughfare." "Thus far, and no farther." To lean against that blank wall forever and ever, and have no higher or better thought enter the mind; to grasp

no new or holier truth ; to feel no other or loftier aspiration ; to see no new work to do for God or man ; to find by experience that every effort put forth is but a waste of strength, whereby we can at best “mark time,” but never “march forward” ; nay, more than that, to believe that we have reached the end of all things, and that there is no “forward” to march to or even to hope for and dream of,—all this would be a living death, compared to which annihilation would be a blessing. But to know that, wherever I pitch my tent to-night, I can pitch it still farther on in the fields of blessedness to-morrow ; and, however high I have climbed, there are loftier heights awaiting my restless feet, with a broader horizon and a more glorious view ; and, however much I have learned, there are truths enough left to occupy my mind through countless ages, —*that* is the hope and joy of immortality, without which unending life would soon be unending sadness. Yes : that is the *assurance* of immortality. Ah, friends, you may well thank God for the mystery which touches your knowledge on every side ; for, in giving you some slight glimpse of its vastness, he gives assurance of long ages in which you can explore its depths.

I have tried to give you, thus far, two reasons why you should not be discouraged, if you are still “feeling after” the God whom others say they “*know*.” The first is, that many who declare their positive certainty to-day have their times of depression also, when they can only grope in the darkness, and walk by faith, not sight. The second is, that no one feels certain about the *whole* of religion, but, the more he knows, the more glimpses he catches of a vast region of the un-

known, through which he must grope his way. It remains to give a *third* reason for not being discouraged by the difference between our timid faith and the confident assurance of a man like Job; and that reason is, that this "feeling after" the truth is simply the divinely appointed way for passing from the unknown to the known. What we lay hold of in the darkness, ignorant of its meaning, power, and worth, we bring to the light and put to the test in the life. We give it a little space in the garden of our own souls, like some new plant concerning whose nature we wonder; and, when the harvest season draws nigh, and the time for the ripening of fruits has come, its hidden virtues will appear. We shall know then, beyond all doubt and questioning, whether it was a shoot from the tree of life. If its nature is divine, we shall be convinced of it by the divine effects it produces.

And this experience of life has always been the test for Christianity and the foundation of the firmest Christian faith. It has turned guesses into beliefs, and beliefs into positive knowledge. What you try timidly to-day, as a lad first placing his foot on the ice, you try boldly to-morrow, because you are sure it will bear your weight. He who begins by doing the will ends by knowing the doctrine. His life is his light. He prays in all sincerity, and knows that an answering blessing comes. He gives in all charity, and knows it is more blessed to give than to receive. He forgives those who have trespassed against him, and the divine assurance comes that God has forgiven his trespasses too. He takes up his cross trustingly and patiently, and is soon convinced that as his day so shall his strength be.

He enters bravely into battle with besetting faults, relying upon the help of the ever-present God, and finds, ere long, that in so doing he comes off conqueror, and more than conqueror, through Him who loves him. He walks in the footsteps of the Master, and henceforth knows, through his holier thoughts and purer aspirations, that it is indeed the way which leads daily nearer God and heaven. The strongest evidence of Christianity is to be found in a Christian life; for he who "feels after" the truth, in this spirit, is sure to find it, since it "is not far from any one of us." Only be Christ-like, and you will know the Christ.

And so, because the life is the truest source of knowledge, there is hope for the weakest, humblest soul that is groping in the darkness, seeking better things. The most vital truths of all do not need that mental research which philosophers and theologians alone can give, for they come most readily through the obedience of the soul. So you will find ignorant and unlettered men, who know nothing about our theories of digestion, and never care to ask how food is turned into strength, and yet through eating they grow healthier and stronger than many of the wisest teachers; and others there are who never speculate on the source or nature of heat, and could learn but little of it if they did, but all the same they are warmed by the glowing fire no less than the wisest professor of the land. So, too, you will find humble souls who never rise to the height of a great argument nor comprehend the subtlest speculations, and yet they are warmed by reading the gospel pages, and gain health and strength as they tread the path of obedience. Oftentimes, they

have a clearer faith, a brighter hope, a keener vision, than the best trained mind in the world ; for things which are hidden from the wise, who merely speculate about them, are revealed unto babes who practise them in the daily events of life. Therefore could the Psalmist say, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."

Hence, right doing is the divine road to that knowledge wherein we find our peace and joy. "Thinking" is of service ; but "obedience" only, leads to the *knowing* in which eternal life is found. So what you think of prayer, for example, is not the most important question ; but, rather, what do you *know* of prayer ? Do you know by your own experience that it brings comfort in sorrow and deliverance in hours of temptation ? Do you know that it can call back wandering desires, and fix the heart on God and holiness and heaven ? Those are the only vital questions on the subject ; and, compared with them, what you merely *think* of prayer is of very little moment. And, in like manner, what you think of Christ is of secondary importance, when compared with what you know of him. What do you know of his power to excite holier thoughts in your mind, holier desires in your heart ? Have you indeed found through your own experience that he can lift you up from where you are, and place you where you ought to be ? Have you found that the nearer you are to him, the nearer you are in faith and love to the heavenly Father ? Have his precepts and life actually helped you to lay hold of a higher good and climb up the mount of excellence ? And so have you learned through your own experience that in very truth it is

life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? Those are the heart-searching questions to be answered first and foremost; and, in comparison with what you thus *know* of Christ, what you *think* of him is of very little moment.

Then, too, it is well to have some thoughts about the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God; but it is far better to have some *knowledge* of it. What do you know of "a power not yourself that makes for righteousness"? What do you know of thoughts that enter your mind, you cannot tell when or how, but you are sure from their holiness that they came from heaven? What do you know of aspirations that spring up within you, and must surely be of God, because they lead your heart to him? What do you know of a power that turns your hesitating steps toward the right, and sends a voice through all the recesses of your being, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" Yes, what do you know, by your own personal experience, of the power of the Holy Spirit to take possession of human hearts, and turn the men of to-day into men of God? Those are the vital questions which thus probe the spiritual life; and, in comparison with them, what you merely *think* of God's spirit is of little consequence.

Then feel after God in the way of obedience, and you will find him erelong; for he is not far away. The experience of life will furnish an answer to your many questionings, and right doing will banish all your doubts. The uncertainties will make way for what is certain, belief will grow to knowledge, and faith be lost in sight. The Christian life will be your bright

and shining light; and, though to-day you are groping hesitatingly along the road, you will see at last with open vision the realities of earth and heaven, as this faint light grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

OCT. 10, 1880.

VII.

FALSE TO SELF.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”— Ex. xx., 16.

I HAVE cut out of that verse and held up before you the only piece I had any occasion to use to-day. There is another scrap of it, as you well know, which I have laid aside for future uses, to be brought out when the times require. For the whole passage reads, “Thou shalt not bear false witness *against thy neighbor*”; and there are seasons when one wishes this might be thundered from a new Sinai, or else whispered by the still, small voice which is heard when the thunder is unheeded. When *Passion* exaggerates the faults of another, and declares him the “worst” man that ever lived, his spirit the basest, his speech the falsest, and his actions the vilest; when *Envy* detracts from the virtue of another, and hides her eyes from his best qualities or wilfully looks at them in a blackened “glass, darkly,” instead of “face to face”; when *Scandal* maligns the reputation of another, and stains it all over with foul insinuations to make it an object of hatred and scorn; when *Cowardice* holds her tongue in the presence of those who assail the friends she professes to love or the cause she pretends to hold dear, and thus by her mere silence seems to assent to the accu-

sations brought forward; or when, meanest of all, though whether worst of all God only knows, the *Back-biter* creeps in and out among the admirers of some good man or woman to hint at blemishes he does not care to talk about openly, or to express by a look the innuendo he does not care to put into words even so far as that mere hint would go; then, when Perjury, Slander, Gossip, or Falsehood of any kind would injure the fair name and fair fame of a fellow-being, it is well to remember the command which every conscience, all over the world, recognizes as in very truth a word from God,—“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

But, to-day, I take a part of the command, and yet the *whole spirit* of it, to put before you in the form too often overlooked, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy” *self*. For a man has no more right to give an untrue representation of himself than of another, no more right to exaggerate the faults or detract from the virtues or malign the reputation of his own soul than of some fellow-creature’s. If his good name has anything sacred about it to be guarded with jealous care, it should most of all, it would seem, be saved from his own tampering with it; and all the indignation with which he springs forward to shield it from the unjust charges of others should lead him to deliver it from any risk of being misrepresented by his own words and deeds. Why should he allow himself to make his own character appear worse than it deserves, any more than he would sully the character of any one else? As if, in the name of truth, justice, right of every kind, he is not bound to avoid all false

testimony against himself, no less carefully than against his neighbor !

Now, of the two somewhat different ways in which this false witness against one's self is borne, only *one* has commonly received the condemnation which is justly its due. To represent the self in any way as a great deal *better* than it really is, not merely called forth from the Great Teacher the oft repeated, "Woe unto you, hypocrites," but has received from every religious teacher in every land the most withering rebukes. To turn all life into a masquerade, wherein each seeks to disguise his actual character and be taken for a hero or saint ; to hide the old sins beneath a robe of spotless white, as if he had been born again into the innocence of childhood ; to be a Knight-Templar in outward appearance, as one sworn to do battle against every form of iniquity in the name of the Lord and his Christ, while underneath the glittering armor he is plotting only schemes of evil ; to put on any garb of friendship, love, or religion, simply to carry out personal ends and secure some form of gain,—that is a kind of hypocrisy which Justice long ago summoned to her tribunal, tried, sentenced, and punished before the eyes of all the world. Whatever else you are guilty of, do not be hypocrites ! Publicans and sinners, who were willing to be known for the spiritual bankrupts they were, came more quickly to Jesus than certain Pharisees who laid claim to spiritual riches which were not their own.

Now, the viciousness of this pretence, as has been said already, has been set forth so often and insisted on so strongly that no one who practises it has anything

to say in its behalf. But closely allied to all this is another pretence, equally vicious in its nature, and therefore equally deserving to be branded with the name of hypocrisy. For not only he who represents his inward character as a great deal *better* than it is, but he also who represents it as *worse*, bears false witness against himself. Too often we overlook this, in giving testimony concerning ourselves. Sometimes, indeed, we regard this injustice to our own souls as a virtue to be proud of, instead of a fault to be corrected. As if a falsehood were any less false, because told about one's self! As if injustice were any the less unjust, because practised toward one's own soul! As if dishonesty were any the less dishonest, because, in weighing out the "just recompense of reward" for every trait of character, we deal unfairly with ourselves alone! "Ye are not your own," said a Christian apostle; and in truth we are *not* our own, in any such sense that we have a right to traduce, misrepresent, and speak falsely about that inmost being of ours which is partly the gift of God in his providence, and partly the gift of our parents through hereditary transmission, and partly the result of our own efforts. And if any one does this, the "Woe unto you, hypocrites," applies as much to him as to that other class which has been always and everywhere denounced.

Even in its least objectionable form, this false witness against one's self is no virtue, in spite of its affectation of modesty and humility. Here, it comes as a depreciation of self, which the speaker would be very sorry to have taken as the popular estimate of his worth. There it comes in the guise of a coarse

bluntness which is assumed to hide the tender feelings of which he is half-ashamed. Now, it takes the shape of an open attack on some man or cause to call attention away from the secret aid he is giving. And, again, it pretends to be very sceptical, and bristles all over with doubts and questionings to hide the real conviction which has come to the mind. A certain retired sea-captain would give his most expensive wines and cordials to any sick beggar who needed them, and give a host of oaths at the same time, cursing him, as far as words went, in every imaginable form; and you have heard of others who could not help giving bread to the hungry, but, out of the same affectation of hard feelings, pelted them with the loaves. The little boy wondered that the closed fist of a gentleman almost knocked him to the ground in response to his call for charity, but the hand he raised to ward off the blow caught the silver dollar the fist enclosed. For some souls are much better than their own evidence concerning their character would indicate; and, unlike some of Shakspeare's personages, they break "the word of promise to the ear," but keep "it to the hopes."

The "least objectionable" form of false witness against one's self this is; and few, if any, would dream of denouncing it with bitter words. Yet it is a foolish thing to do, and one by no means harmless in its results. You would not think of tampering with the delicate machinery of a watch, so as to make it cheat you and everybody else as to the correct time; how, then, can you think of tampering with the still more delicate machinery of human nature, and throwing the inner and the outer life out of all harmony with each

other! For the outer ought fairly to represent the inner. It *will* fairly represent it, naturally and inevitably, if we but give it the chance. And, therefore, it is at least a "folly" (to use the mildest of all appropriate words) to throw these wheels of life out of gear and prevent this frame, which is so "fearfully and wonderfully made," from recording before the eyes of the world the workings of "the hidden man of the heart." There may be some sense, even if there is some danger, in claiming to be *better* than we actually are; for we may look upon it merely in the light of pre-empting a section of the spiritual world for which we mean to secure clear and indisputable title-deeds by and by. We may regard it as entering a claim to whatever gold is below the surface and whatever fruit is above it, though we do not propose to take actual possession to-day and begin to dig or till the soil. As an ideal, therefore, to aim at, something can be said in its behalf; but what sense can there be in pretending a vice which does not exist in the heart, or denying a virtue which dwells there? Surely, it is pure mischief, unaccompanied by any advantage, to derange the natural workings of the soul by seeming to be worse than we really are.

Yet, while all this affectation of evil may be put down by some as nothing more than idle folly, there is another form of bearing false witness against one's self which cannot be let off so lightly from the tribunal of conscience, or dismissed so quickly from our consideration. Whoever puts on a habit, indulges a passion, or speaks a word from which his inmost spirit revolts, is guilty of bearing false testimony against the highest

and best parts of his nature. For every man has this inner spirit which he cannot help recognizing as his own real self. When he acts contrary to it, he claims to have been "carried away by passion," as by a power unnatural and foreign to his soul. When violent words pass his lips without any restraint, his excuse is that he "forgot himself"; and, when fierce anger has driven him to some unexpected deed, he claims to have been "beside himself." So Paul, when he went down into the depths and tasted the bitterness of remorse, thought it no longer himself, but the sin that dwelt within him, that did the evil he wished to avoid. And, on the other hand, whoever repents of sin has always been looked upon as coming to himself; and his instinctive feeling on coming to himself is, "I will arise and go unto my Father." The universal language of mankind bears witness in this way to its universal conviction that one's real self is this inner spirit, which sits in judgment on all his thoughts, words, and deeds. It is a spirit that is but slowly affected by his vices and crimes. It refuses to acknowledge any of his wickedness as belonging to itself. It acts as a divinely appointed judge, to praise whatever good we commit and severely condemn the evil. Even in the whirlwind of passion, it fills each lull with its threatening "Woe!" or its pitying tones of "Foolish, foolish man!" Never can it be bribed to hold its peace, though all other judges are silenced. It scorns the gold that has been won by fraud, and will not let it be enjoyed in quietness. It reproaches the reputation gained by intrigue, and threatens it with a speedy fall. It despises the power gained by usurpation, and shows

a tyrant that, though he has conquered all things else, he has not subdued himself. It never consents to anger, pride, or selfishness, to hatred, revenge, or lust, but always protests against whatever evil is committed, and keeps its robe of innocence unstained by earth's pollutions. The outward conduct may seem at times to be filled with selfish deeds of rapine and deceit; the lips may frame constant falsehoods, and utter foulest oaths; the thoughts may be guilty of evil devices, and the chamber of imagery contain much that is corrupt,—and yet, in the hour of the soul's deepest degradation, there will be a "holy of holies" in the breast, wherein this God-given spirit dwells and denounces the sin that rules the man. Sooner or later, when the passions are weary or asleep, it will assert its existence, and make us feel that all these things are outrages on our deepest, highest selves.

Every man, whatever his daily conduct, feels at times the workings of this better nature which he cannot help recognizing as being, more truly than all things else, his real self. This it is which, in the presence of heartfelt grief, makes every cry of pain or look of agony call out a hearty sympathy. It opens a hundred hearts, hands, and doors to receive the stranger who has fallen in our streets. It makes eager pleasure-seekers give up their enjoyments, so as not to disturb the sick; and causes coarse, rough men to walk on tip-toe to let a little child sleep in peace. It startles one from his bed at night, and sends him forth into the cold, dark, stormy streets at the very first sound of distress that reaches his ear. It leads him, ere he is aware, to brave death, and often to meet it, in rescuing

a fellow-being from danger by violence, fire, or flood. And all this, not for a benefactor or friend or even passing acquaintance, but for utter strangers. Coolly, deliberately, with a calm, fixed purpose, it may be true, as Paul says, that "scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die"; and yet many have died unhesitatingly for those they have never seen before, when they have not waited to consult a selfish expediency, but have acted spontaneously from the heart. While the number of Christian martyrs who have died for their faith is great, almost countless, it is still less than the number of "unchristian" men, so called, who in these moments of sudden impulse have parted with health and life in the service of humanity. For, all through the history of individuals and nations, this better nature, though often covered by baser passions, keeps "cropping out," like granite rocks from the overlying earth, and throwing itself up heavenward in tall peaks, which tower above the dusty plain below. And this better nature, the highest, the deepest, the best, is instinctively felt by every human being to be his real self.

Therefore, it is with a fuller, richer meaning than we give to the words in our common speech that we are told to-day, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thyself." The life which we live daily in the presence of the world should be that which this heart of hearts approves, so that, in judging the inner by the outer, the world shall not *misjudge* it. But, friends, *is* the daily life of that nature, or does it testify untruly of the spirit that is within? I move in and out among the

people of the community in which I dwell, and catch the sound of its lying words which are meant to deceive, and its treacherous words which are meant to injure, and its profane words which shock all Christian reverence, and its — *other* words which are tenfold more wicked than oaths, because springing from a viler passion and leading to worse results ; and I know such men are doing violence to their own natures in all that, and are bearing false witness against themselves. I look into the homes of those who seem to seek honor from others by spending time, thought, money in personal display, and whose highest concern in life, if one may judge from outward appearance, ends in the clothing of the body and the furnishing of the home. That is the only evidence they put forth in their own behalf ; but I know human nature well enough to be sure that they are hiding other and better things out of sight, and their outward appearance bears false witness against their real selves. And I go among the young men and women who are soon to be called on, in Church and State, to take the place of those who must rest from their labors. Some of them are living as if the world were only a ball-room where life is waltzed away to the sound of dreamy music, or a play-house where the petty farce of life is acted on the stage ere the tragedy of death is ushered in. Few signs of devotion do they give to any of those great causes of humanity which claim our strength and sympathy, and too often they wish you to look upon them as outside the list of candidates for any post where a good work is to be done. Protestations of indifference to all such things are by no means infrequent ; and yet, in making

them, they are bearing false witness against themselves.

Inside this half-finished house we are to live in, the Divine Architect has placed his working model, in accordance with which we are to carry on the building, until the whole structure which rises up before men's eyes shall be like that miniature structure which so few have looked upon. And, "See," he says, "that thou do all things according to the pattern shown thee." For "man is to work out what God has wrought in," just that,—that alone. This inner nature which shrinks away from the evil the hands keep meddling with, which sends a flush of shame to the cheek when the lips have told the falsehood, which bows down the murderer with the weight of remorse when the guilty act is finished; this spirit which takes its stand by truth and righteousness, and ever urges the lower nature to higher and better things; the spirit which allows us no lasting inward satisfaction until we follow out the divine order, "first *pure* and *then* peaceable,"—this is to be the inspirer and regulator of our lives. And if any one among us does not yield to its promptings and obey its voice; if any one does not make the outward life, which the world looks on, accord with this inner life which God quickened in the soul; in short, if any one does not act out that highest and best nature which God has placed within,—then to him comes the lesson of to-day, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thyself."

SEPT. 15, 1876.

VIII.

THE LIMITS OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

"The foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so. . . . Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." — MATT. xxv., 8, 9.

I AM to speak this morning upon the limits of self-sacrifice. It may prove more of an essay, in the strict use of the word, than a sermon; *i.e.*, it may be an attempt to state a truth rather than the prophetic utterance of one who clearly sees the end from the beginning. But, however much it fails in completeness, I hope it may set your minds to thinking earnestly upon the theme, and may give some good suggestions to aid you in your thoughts. I have not the slightest expectation of drawing the line which shall mark out the exact limits of self-sacrifice, and I do not believe it *can* be drawn, even by the wisest teachers of the land; but it is something to recognize the fact that such limits really exist, however difficult it is for us to find them. It is something to know that there are duties to *self* as well as to *others*. It is something to feel that we are not to reproach ourselves or be reproached by others, because our own well-being has a place in our regard.

The question is not a purely abstract one, after all, — such as may occur to a minister in his study, but

need never be decided by his people in the daily routine of work and pleasure. Why, it came up one night to a band of merry Jewish maidens, who had gone to meet a bridal party and attend the wedding reception. With burning torches in hand, they went forth to the road-side, and strained their eager eyes in vain for the gay procession that was so slow in coming, till one after another was worn out with weariness, and all at last fell asleep upon the grassy banks. But, at midnight, they were awakened by the music and shouting, and saw the bridegroom's party drawing near. Quickly, they rose up to join the happy band and lend their voices to the merry songs; and the five who had brought fresh oil to guard against the dangers of delay refilled their lamps; and the five who had taken no such forethought saw their torches flicker and go out. Then, the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered: "Not so. There's not enough for us all; and, if you want any, you must go and buy it." So the five whose lights were trimmed and burning joined the wedding procession, and went into the great feast which had been prepared; and the others were left in the outer darkness, with none of the joy which they came out to find. There you have the whole question incidentally brought before you in this parable which Jesus told. Why did not the wise give the oil that was asked for, even if they went without themselves? Why did they not fill the other lamps, even if it left their own empty? If only half of the party could go into the feast, why did they not let the five foolish girls go in their stead, while they

walked home in the darkness? I suppose the real reason why they did nothing of this kind is *because they were wise*; and if they had complied with the demand made upon them, and given their oil away, and thus been obliged to miss the party themselves, there would have been *ten* foolish virgins instead of *five*. And the parable, if it had come down to us at all, would have been known as the "story of the ten maidens, none of whom were wise, and all were foolish." For those five girls who refused to fill the lamps of their friends and go without themselves decided righteously as well as prudently. There are "limits to self-sacrifice"; and it was *not* their duty to stay away from the feast, and let their thoughtless companions go in their place.

Now, the question as to how much we must be willing to sacrifice for others, which came so unexpectedly to these merry Jewish girls, is just as apt to come to us in the daily walks of life. How large a part of your daily wages or yearly income will you spend in charity, and how much will you deliberately keep to supply your own present wants or guard against future needs? How large a part of your time will you spend in self-improvement to the great increase of your stores of knowledge, and how large a portion in the instruction of others? How often will you gratify your love for the beautiful and pleasing,—which the Creator placed in your breast to be gratified,—and how often will you deny it, as you sometimes must (for even Christ pleased not himself), and thrust it far from you for others' sake? For the subject, as it thus comes before us, has a wide application to our daily lives;

and instead of being an idle theory for preachers to speculate about on Sundays, it is a practical matter for all to act upon throughout the week. And I am confident that one result of your examination of the theme will be the conviction that parents and children, husbands and wives, friends and acquaintances, have sometimes sacrificed in a way and to a degree which did more harm than good, and which was not required by either the letter or the spirit of any Christian precept.

The *first* help which we receive in ascertaining the limits of this duty,—for I repeat, it surely has limits, since at one time it is a duty to give up life even for another, and again it becomes equally a duty to refuse him a single dollar because the gift would surely do him harm,—the first help toward ascertaining these limits comes from our *practical judgment* and *good sense*. These very often draw a different line from what the head directs, but it is far more apt to be correct. They give a different answer to these perplexing questions from that which the head dictates, but it is one that accords far more nearly with the everlasting truth. When a good man's theory and practice disagree upon questions of duty, the practice will in nearly every case be right, and the theory wrong. How often, therefore, you hear it said, "Such a one is better than his creed." He trusts those who, according to his creed, are utterly vile; he loves those who, according to his creed, ought to be abhorred; he labors hopefully for those concerning whom, according to his creed, he ought to despair. Now, what I say is that, when the theory and practice of a good man are so far apart in questions of duty, it

is the theory which is almost invariably in error; for that is commonly the result of abstract reasoning alone, while the practice is the result, not of this thinking merely, but also of the feelings, the hopes, desires, aspirations, experiences, and everything which enters into the formation of character. And all these elements combined give the truest solution to the problem of life.

When, for example, the running of Sunday cars was proposed, a vast majority of Christian preachers protested against it as a sin that would lead to many immoralities; but, when the cars began running, the preachers themselves were among the first to use them to reach their city churches or to make their country exchanges. Inconsistent it certainly was; but they ought not to have been accused of either hypocrisy in their sermons or lack of conscientiousness in their lives. The simple truth was that the head dictated the sermon, and did it beyond doubt in perfect sincerity, yet made a great mistake; while the actual use of the Sunday cars, after having protested against it, was the work of the whole nature of the whole man, and proved to be the correct solution of the problem.

Now this same practical judgment renders invaluable service in suggesting the limits of self-sacrifice. After we have heard or made the most sweeping statements on the duty of living for others, there are irrepressible instincts within us which insist on a proper care of self. There is little need of saying that, in the case of a worldly-minded man or woman, these instincts go too far, and take an improper care of self, to the great neglect of what the world rightly claims; but none the

less is it true that whoever desires a good life, with a clear conscience and an honest heart, will be greatly aided by these instincts in determining how much should be given to others and how much kept for ourselves. One cannot draw beforehand a sharp dividing line which shall satisfy either himself or the world; and yet when the decisive moment comes, and an answer must be given, because clamorous tongues are saying, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," this practical judgment, which speaks for the whole nature of the whole man, will tell whether he should give it and go home alone in the darkness, or should reply: "Not so: there is not enough for you and me. Your duty is to go and buy for yourself."

In the second place, self-sacrifice is limited by the *obvious effect* it produces on *others* in given cases. Sometimes it is the most beautiful of all acts that can be imagined, and proves itself to be in harmony with the ordering of the world by the divineness of its results. For there are cases where, in the whole family or social circle, there is oil enough for only one lamp, and each is willing to give up what he has to keep that one lamp burning brightly, though it belongs to another, and not himself. Children, in this spirit, have sometimes sacrificed everything for parents in the time of a great misfortune; sacrificed their hopes and joys and their love's young dreams; sacrificed their chosen professions, whose financial rewards would be so slow in coming, and taken up some labor, which was to them the veriest drudgery, but whose compensation would come at once, and add to the household comforts. And what more touching to read of than the

sacrifices which brothers and sisters will sometimes make to give one of their number, who has great and rare talents, the opportunity of pursuing science, art, or literature, or of fitting himself for the place nature meant him to fill? He himself feels that his success is theirs; and, in the hour of his triumph, when otherwise his joy would be full, he is somewhat saddened by the thought that so much self-denial from them was needful to make him what he is. Yes, self-sacrifice is very beautiful then, when earth's greatest discoverers and inventors, poets and prophets, have become the benefactors of humanity and the lights of the world, through the unbounded generosity of those who have robbed their own lamps of oil, in order that these might ever be burning and shining lights.

But not *all* cases of giving up for the sake of others are of this kind. Such an act, at times, however conscientiously performed, impoverishes us without enriching the world; and, though we have given our very best and in the best spirit, we are forced to admit at last, what others saw from the first, that, instead of doing any good, we have fostered laziness, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of duty. In case of almsgiving to tramps and strangers who beg from door to door, we have become so completely convinced of this that we rarely, if ever, give money in response to such appeals; but we sometimes fail to see that the principle has an application nearer home, and touches those who are of our own household. Yet nothing, I think, is clearer to a disinterested observer than that certain home sacrifices are attended with most pernicious results, which prove that they ought never to have been made.

No wonder this one is a tyrant, when that one is his slave! No wonder he is greedy, when he has always had his own share and hers too! No wonder he is idle, when others are waiting to do his work for him! No wonder he is selfish, when they act as if his comfort was the supreme good! No wonder he is wasteful, when he knows that, as soon as his lamp begins to grow dim, others will rob themselves of the last drop of oil for the sake of refilling it! So, when I heard of a young girl "making a slave of herself" for an able-bodied brother, who could have supported her as well as she did him,—when I heard that it so completely spoiled such manhood as he had that *he was willing* to enter an easy profession, and let her lead a life of toil, willing to wear better clothes, live in better rooms, and eat better food than she could afford (though she paid for both), willing to go off on summer vacations with her money, while she was forced to practise strict economy and stay at home,—it seemed clear that she had passed the true limits of self-sacrifice, since she was ruining the character of the very one whom she longed to aid. Self-sacrifice ceases to be a duty, when it leads to these pernicious results.

Then, in the third place, we shall be helped in marking out these limits by considering that *not all* our *duties* are for others: we owe something to ourselves as well! The strong must bear the burdens of the weak, but must bear their own burdens at the same time. The wise must teach the ignorant, but they must first learn the lesson themselves. We must aid others in doing their work, but must not neglect

to take hold of our own zealously, and finish what the Father has given us to do. We must train up our hands to helpfulness, and prepare our minds for reading the thoughts of God, and fit our souls for the indwelling of the divine spirit. "The age wants men," and the first which you are to give is yourself. It wants "large-hearted men"; and, therefore, you must be large-hearted. It wants "strong-minded men"; and, therefore, you must be strong-minded. It wants men whose whole influence shall be on the side of truth and righteousness; and, therefore, you must fit yourself for standing in that place, and doing something helpful when you are there. For you owe something to yourself as well as to the world; and, among the evils you are going to pull up, do not forget the beam that is in your own eye, and, among the natures you are going to fit for earth and heaven alike, do not forget your own.

Yes, there are duties to self which directly limit the duty of self-sacrifice. There are powers to be trained, time to be used, and talents to be employed in such a way that, whenever the Creator asks an account of our stewardship, he can have his own with interest. Even if we looked simply at the ultimate good to be conferred on humanity, we should justify a certain care for self to-day. 'Tis seldom, if ever, wise charity to give away our seed-corn during the winter for the supply of immediate needs, and thereby cut ourselves off from next year's harvest altogether. It would fill one hungry mouth to-day, but would prevent our filling a hundred hungry ones next fall; and, though some such charity may be absolutely needed now and then, it is

so rare and almost unheard of that it scarcely needs taking into account. Yet, when an elder sister gives up all plans of self-improvement and "all her chances in life" for the younger members of the family, it is sometimes like feeding them on the seed corn which was given her, that she might raise a glorious harvest by and by for the glory of God and the welfare of man. It is an old saying, "Whoever knows two letters can teach him who knows but one." And yet I should like to supplement it by adding that, if he spends all his time in teaching those two, he will never learn the rest. Had Newton, Pascal, Agassiz, and others, as soon as they learned two letters in the alphabet of wisdom, begun to teach them, had they taught them from morning till night, from the beginning of the year to the end, had they never withdrawn from the world and shut themselves up for self-improvement, they would have stayed forever on the lowest rounds of the ladder, and never been the great leaders and helpers of the world. And if to-day they are the benefactors of humanity, it is because when they had mastered two letters they did *not* spend all their time in teaching others, but labored for years to enrich their minds and store them with the highest truths of God. It is indeed hard to tell in every case where duty to others ends and duty to self begins; but it is much to recognize the fact that there are these two classes, which in the very nature of things limit each other.

The sermon has a double application. For there are morbid consciences so afraid of not doing enough for others as to do too little for themselves. They forget the claims of self-improvement; and, when the

time comes for a noble manhood or womanhood, they have given all their oil away, and their lamps are gone out. But there is also an application of the truth to the opposite class of souls, and this is what we far too often forget when we approach the theme. For the sacrifice which ought not to be *made* ought not to be *demande*d or accepted. The five thoughtless girls ought not to have taken the oil they wanted, even if the others, through a pitiable weakness, had consented to give it. Human duty is never one-sided. It is a mutual affair, in which action and reaction are equal; and St. Paul's rule, "The strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak, and not to please themselves," would be just as Christ-like, if it read, "The weak ought not to please themselves either by leaving their burdens to the strong." The unthrifty ought not to please themselves by leaving the industrious to provide for the whole. The thoughtless ought not to please themselves, while trusting that the wise will guard them against any threatening danger or rescue them from whatever evil comes.

One can say but little against those morbid consciences which pass the true limits of self-sacrifice, where it ceases to be a duty and becomes a weakness; for their mistake is rooted in love, and it is better in all cases of doubt to do too much than too little for those with whom we are brought in contact. But who *can* say too much against those who accept all they can get, and care not how great a sacrifice it was? In what shameful selfishness it is rooted,—this idleness, which is willing to live on another's industry! this carelessness, which is willing to trust to another's fore-

thought! this weakness, which is willing to be carried along, and will not rise, take up its bed, and walk! this viciousness, which is willing to sin seventy times seven times, because it believes it can as often as that turn and say, "I repent," and be forgiven! For this is a far too common shame on our manhood and womanhood, that many a one is so lost to honor and worth that he accepts, even if he does not demand, sacrifices which ought never to be made. Therefore, as we go to our homes, let it not be chiefly with the question whether we are doing too much for others, but rather whether we are not asking and taking too much from them. It is a shame to overtax a loving nature, just because, in the strength of its affections, it is willing to do and endure all things for our sake. The sacrifices we would not make we ought not to ask for, since the Golden Rule is still the true rule of life,— "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them."

JAN. 16, 1881.

IX.

CATALYTIC POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—JOHN xiv., 19.

THAT is a mysterious power by which the spirit in us arouses into new activity the corresponding spirit in those about us. One trembles on the battle-field, and runs away with fear; and the panic spreads through all the ranks, and turns the army into a mass of frightened fugitives. One enters school with all the chords of his being tuned up to "mischief pitch," and all the rest must act as if possessed by the same evil spirit. Sir Galahad sees the Holy Grail let down from heaven through the rifted roof of Camelot, and at once all King Arthur's knights must vow to search a twelve-month and a day to see it too. So one holds to a truth with that intensity of conviction which makes those who know nothing of its reasonableness believe in his belief. Because he has hope, they are hopeful; because he has trust, they are confident; because he has courage, they are brave; because he lives, they live also. Hence, it was that, when Elisha came to the river-bank and remembered the faith which once filled the heart of his old master and friend, he stretched forth his hands and called aloud with kindred faith, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

This effect which one body produces on others by its mere presence, without imparting anything to them or taking anything from them, is called by chemists catalysis; and the power of influencing by mere presence or contact is termed catalytic power. You can take a basin of water at the freezing-point but not yet frozen, tap it with your finger, and at the very instant of the jar the crystals of ice will shoot across the surface. Or you can take a basin of melted sugar which refuses to harden, drop a few threads into it, and the crystals of candy will at once begin to form around them. Or, to take a far more familiar instance, you put into your batch of new dough a piece of old which has begun to ferment, and you make the whole mass ferment and rise till all is leavened. Now, this result is not brought about by simple mixture, as a tumbler of water might get an acid flavor by the addition of a spoonful of vinegar; for the sour dough keeps all its sourness and does not part with a single atom of it, but merely, by some mysterious power, which the wisest chemist in the world cannot explain, induces through its simple presence all the surrounding lump to follow its example and enter on the same process of fermentation. The material world is filled with instances of this catalysis, where a body neither gives nor takes, but remains just as it was when placed in the midst of others; and yet all that touch it undergo a corresponding change. Because one is decomposing, the others begin to decompose too. One is a magnet, and straightway all the rest would be magnetic also.

But human souls, likewise, have the same catalytic power of affecting other souls for good or evil by their

mere presence, without imparting anything to them or taking anything from them. Here is one man who comes before you in a controversial spirit, and all the combative qualities of your nature spring up to meet him. Here is another, who invariably excites so much repugnance and disgust that you cannot endure his presence or draw a good easy breath while he is near ; and a third about as constantly makes you angry, if you are at all addicted to losing your temper ; and a fourth awakens into new life the passions which you hoped were dead, but which prove to have been only sleeping. And yet, again, there will be some who will draw nigh to you in all the purity of their spirits, and immediately the old thoughts and feelings which were governing you take a speedy flight. If such souls as these would always remain with us, we think, How easy to lead a Christian life ! There are men and women in whose company it seems impossible for us to sin again, so powerfully do they stimulate all the better parts of our nature. Because they live a holy life, we would live it also.

Now, this fact, that the Spirit in us, just by its simple presence, awakens a corresponding spirit in those around us, explains the otherwise mysterious rule that a man gets in the end exactly what he deserves from the world. Jacob deceives his blind old father Isaac and his warm-hearted brother Esau, and thinks for a moment he has made a fortune out of it ; but, pretty soon, he is just as much deceived in turn by his father-in-law Laban, and, in his old age, his ten sons come to him in a body with a cruel lie in their mouths, and a little

coat of many colors, stained all over with blood, in their hands. The story of his early life does but tell how he defrauded others, and that of his later years how others defrauded him, until he cried out at the last, in the bitterness of his heart, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

In one of Rome's deadliest combats, her legions stood defenceless for a while and were on the point of retreating, when, suddenly, they stooped down and picked up the javelins thrown by their enemies, and, hurling them back with greater force and surer aim, gained a complete victory. So, in the moral combats of the world, do men like to send as good as they receive; and thus it is that hate rouses up hate, and kindness kindness, till whatever we have given, whether of good or evil, is given unto us again in "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." For like begets like; or, as Mr. Emerson puts it: "Love, and you shall be loved. All love is mathematically just, as much as the two sides of an algebraic equation. The good man has absolute good, which, like fire, turns everything to its own nature, so that you cannot do him any harm; but, as the royal armies sent out against Napoleon, when he approached cast down their colors and from enemies became friends, so disasters of all kinds, as sickness, offence, poverty, prove benefactors." Like a decree of the Medes and Persians which changeth not is this immutable law by which spirit awakens a similar spirit in others' bosoms. Not more surely does the magnet call out the slumbering magnetism in other metals than your genuine charity, for example, will arouse chari-

table feelings around you. So he that watereth shall himself be watered, and the bread cast out in faith upon the flood shall return after many days. For no one can escape this catalytic power of human souls; and, whatever he may *say* in sheer perverseness, he cannot *feel* harshly toward any one who is always kind and gentle in his judgment of the world. And, as the surest way to raise a crop of good wheat is to *sow* good wheat, so the surest way of securing any kind of treatment from others is to treat them in exactly that way.

“Would'st thou, when thy faults are known,
Wish that pardon should be shown?
Be forgiving then, and do
As thou would'st be done unto.

“For compassion if thou call,
Be compassionate to all;
If thou would'st affection find,
Be affectionate and kind.”

Now, it must be evident that the amount of this influence is not measured by the amount of our virtues. It would be, if we were really imparting anything to others, since what we give must always be limited by what we have. But, here, nothing is given away, in any strictness of speech. We keep to the very last all the goodness, faith, and worth we have, and simply call out, by our very presence, the goodness, faith, and worth which were lying dormant in others. When, therefore, a Religious Convention once discussed the question, “Can a man make another a better Christian than himself? Can he give more holiness than he possesses? Can the stream

*Can a man make
another a better
Christian than
himself? Can he
give more holiness
than he possesses?
Can the stream*

rise higher than its source?" it utterly misapprehended the relation of soul to soul, and deceived itself by the figure of speech it employed. Of course, no one can give away more holiness than he possesses; but why not say, what is equally true, that no man can give away any holiness at all. Even the righteousness of Christ is not to be distributed among his followers, as his garments were divided among his murderers; for all the righteousness of the righteous shall cleave unto him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall cleave unto him. We cannot give away virtue like money, a little here and a little there, altogether making up no larger sum than we had at first; but what virtue is in us awakens a similar virtue in others,—similar in kind, that is, but, for aught we know, a thousand-fold greater in degree. What does the awakening may be but as a puny infant crying in the night, while that which is awakened may be a mighty giant whom nothing can withstand. The little heavenly warmth in your soul may thus start another into a fierce conflagration, which shall shoot up so hot and bright that all who see it shall say, "Behold how great a matter a little spark kindleth."

Much of our talk about the inadequacy of our spiritual means to the wished-for ends is utterly needless. Sometimes, when we reckon up our resources, and find them few and small, we shake our heads in doubt and say with Peter, as he looked out on the assembled thousands who were clamoring for food, "Here are five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?" Nothing worth speaking of, surely, if that was all. Very little

spiritual wealth would come to any member of this community, if we could do nothing more than fund our Christian virtues, and then pay out equal shares of the amount to all our fellow-men. But the real duty assigned us — say, rather, the high privilege, if you will — is to live in such a way that the Christianity in us will stimulate the germs of Christianity which God planted in them at birth; and no one can measure then the great results which may follow, unless he has first measured not his own power merely, but God's. Why, right before us may stand a fortress of evil so strong to all appearance that it seems impregnable; and yet one flash of indignation may ignite the train which shall blow the whole to pieces, and leave it as utterly destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah. It is by a man's own powers of reason, conscience, and the will, awakened and aroused by our presence, that the evil spirit is to be exorcised from his breast. We will not then desert the flag of truth and righteousness, or shrink from the combats to which it calls, merely because we are few and those opposed to us are many, or because we are feeble and they are strong. Of ourselves, we could do so little toward redeeming the world, we might well be spared the hopeless task of trying; but, if our feeble voice of love and duty can but reach the ears of the sturdy giant who is sleeping soundly while his enemies are binding him hand and foot, if we can but make him hear the warning cry, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," he will rouse from his ill-timed slumbers, break his bonds, and scatter his cowardly foes. And, therefore, it is written that the foolish things of the world can confound the

wise, and weak things the mighty, and things which are not of seeming worth can bring to nought things that are.

Shall we ask, then, What can we do for the world? The answer will depend on the quality, not the quantity, of our being; for the sum of our influence over human welfare is measured by what we *are*, not by the amount of spiritual wealth we have to bestow. As surely as like begets like, the spirit in us will awaken a similar spirit in others. If we are reverent, we shall rouse up their sluggish reverence; if we are confident as to the goodness and love of God, we shall strengthen their faith; if we are all alive to what is good and right, they will feel the throbbings of the same life, too. Only let us be Christ-like, and whatever is Christ-like in their natures will spring up and try to gain the mastery.

Sometimes, when shot and shell were falling thick and fast upon the lines, and the soldiers began to waver in view of threatening death, an officer stepped calmly forth before the ranks, looked steadily at the foe, and gave his orders in a quiet voice; and all fears left his men at once, as they caught the infection of his courage and grew brave to do his bidding. And, in a darker hour than that, when all the waves of affliction were rolling over a human soul and filling it with fears that would not be controlled, one has come nigh with no eloquent words in his mouth, no help in his hand, but only a calm, confiding spirit which is sure that God cares for it and all the children of men; and, straightway, the mourning soul feels a kindred faith growing up within it, and little by little it casts away its fears,

and by and by it breathes the Christian prayer: "Thy will, my Father, is the best will. May thy will be done!"

You never can foretell what your presence and character may do for another, unless you know all the possibilities for good which are slumbering in his bosom. You take up a shovelful of soil from underneath the forest trees and see nothing in it,—no plant, no root, no seed. But you put it into your fernery where it feels the warm, moist air within the glass case, and soon it begins to teem with life and send up shoots and vines, mosses and ferns, of whose existence you had not dreamed. And so you may take a human soul that seems just as barren of right desires and holy purposes, and bring it near enough to feel the genial light and warmth of another soul, and soon the hidden germs of goodness which had escaped your search will begin to expand and turn the wilderness into a garden, the desert into a fruitful field. Only let the Sun of Righteousness shine: there will be seeds enough of God's own planting to spring up all over the earth.

A mystery of mysteries is this power, which no chemist can explain where it affects matter, and no theologian can account for where it affects mind. Yet, however mysterious in its workings, it is among the most palpable in its results, and can ever be trusted in as one of the immutable laws of God. Be yourself what you would have others be, and the spirit in you will awaken the spirit in them. Be yourself Christ-like, O parent, if you would train your children to a Christ-like life. Be yourself a Christian, O teacher, if you would turn other hearts to the Holy One of Nazareth.

Be yourself pure and holy, my brother, if you would reform the vices of the world. For what a man *does* may be speedily undone, and what he *says* may be forgotten; but what he *is*, in his inmost character, will always influence the characters of those around. Because he lives, they will live also.

DEC. 12, 1875.

X.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR BELIEF.

"I believed, therefore have I spoken."—PSALM cxvi., 10.

Is HONEST belief a good and sufficient reason, by itself, for uttering your thoughts? Does the simple fact that you *believe* justify you in speaking? To those questions, I give a negative answer. Something besides "sincerity" is needed to qualify you for advocating any sentiments. It is, however, too important a subject to be dismissed with a simple yes or no, and is deserving of a most careful consideration from us all.

And note, at the outset, to avoid any misunderstanding, that the subject does not relate to those cases where no speech at all is proper, however true it may be, since

"Truths that are wicked are fittest to hide."

For there are many subjects on which no amount of sincerity can give you the right of speaking; and you are not justified in saying anything at all concerning them, unless your words are not only truthful, but kind, loving, and needful.

But the words of the text refer to very different matters from these. They do not trench on delicate questions of morals and propriety, but relate solely to one's right to advocate publicly his intellectual convictions. Of course, every one may rightly answer the questions, when asked for an opinion, and tell his

inmost thoughts upon the subject ; but, in all cases of religion, morals, politics, and the like, something more than absolute sincerity is needed to justify one in setting up for a public teacher. That this absolute sincerity must be always present "goes without saying" ; but what our orators and teachers are far too slow too learn is that something else is required to qualify them for public speaking.

Look, for example, at what we call the "labor question," and see the remedies proposed for the undeniable evils which weigh down the great mass of humanity. You will find them often to be remedies which are far worse than the disease ; remedies which have been often tried and just as often have failed ; remedies which cause more ills than they cure ; which level for the moment the inequalities of society, but level down to the lowest, not up to the highest ; which take away the great incentives to persistent, skilful labor, and so make the rich poorer, but the poor no richer in the end. You can find many public speakers like these, whose words can have no other effect than to make men idle, discontented, and fit for violent revolution. Yet one cannot in Christian charity deny the honesty of some of these men who set up as leaders to guide their brethren from the house of bondage to the promised land. You have as much reason for doubting everybody's sincerity as theirs. No one in the whole world perhaps can say with greater truthfulness, "I believed, and *therefore* have I spoken" ; and yet, when you see the mischief they have caused, there comes the irresistible conviction that some other qualification than honesty was needful, before they began a work fraught with

so many possibilities of harm. Why, with no other preparation than that, they would not have ventured to pilot a yacht along our coast, and yet they set up for pilots of the ship of state !

Or, if you turn from these themes to the treatment which financial questions have received, even in the American Congress, the same conviction is forced upon you. The most impracticable schemes have been proposed by some of our public men. The most visionary methods of strengthening public credit have been urged, as if history had not already warned us that nation after nation had been brought to bankruptcy by just such means. Very honest some of those speakers may be, and perfectly sincere in declaring that this is their remedy for the public ills ; but none the less is it true that these methods of using the national wealth would soon result in there being little wealth to use.

For a belief may be very sincere, and yet bring great harm on one's self and others. You may candidly think your friends are mistaken in warning you against a certain companion ; but, if he is in reality corrupt, an intimate acquaintance with him will be very apt to corrupt you. Or you may think most sincerely that there was not the slightest sense in advising you not to read a certain class of books ; but, for all that, if you read them, they may poison your mind for years and lead your imagination astray and give you a distaste for what is truly good. Or, to come still more nearly to the highest concerns of life with which our churches principally deal, one may be very incredulous about all the warnings he has received from pastors and teachers,

parents and friends, respecting a certain course of conduct and the dangers of certain habits, but the injury comes just as surely for all that. Not your belief about anything, but the simple fact whether it is good or bad, determines its effect.

If, then, it is true that one may be perfectly sincere in his belief and yet be working only harm to those whom he is influencing, it follows that his responsibility for his belief goes far beyond the one qualification, *honesty*, and demands that other virtues shall underlie and accompany this. The illustrations that have been given lead us up to this one point, "responsibility for belief."

And, here, we are met by the somewhat common assertion that no such responsibility exists. Belief, we are told, is not within our control. It lays hold of us, not we of it. We believe what we *must*, not simply what we *wish*. It is the testimony brought forward, the evidence presented, that makes our minds up for us. Why, our whole system of jury trial proceeds on the supposition that belief is no matter of whim, caprice, or voluntary choice, but is an irresistible conviction that takes hold of us as soon as we have examined all the facts of the case. Such are the assertions continually made; and, as you see at once, they contain a large measure of truth, only they do not justify the conclusion that a man is in no way responsible for his belief. The very illustration brought forward from trial by jury shows that a man's personality, character, and mental action have a great deal to do with the verdict he gives. What is convincing to one may fail to make any impression on the other, so that, with pre-

cisely the same evidence before them, the twelve jurymen often fail to agree. Nor is that result at all connected with the fact that some of the twelve may be very ignorant and not at all skilful in weighing the testimony; for the same disagreement exists among the judges on the bench as among the jury in the box. A man has something to do with the operations of his own mind, and therefore he is to that extent responsible for his belief.

For, in the first place, if he would not be a blind leader of those who listen to him, he must weigh well the evidence on which his faith rests. Before you can decide whether a man is justified in speaking what he believes, you must go back to the previous question, whether he is justified in believing it! And the man himself must follow the advice of the apostle Peter, and be ready to give an answer to those who ask a reason for the hope that is in him. We are ready enough, it would seem, to admit this principle in the daily affairs of life, where the business prospects or social reputation of another is concerned. "Prove your charge, or leave it unspoken," is the warning given by public opinion and the law of the land. We are ready, I say, to admit this principle in the ordinary affairs of life, and yet do not give it the important place it deserves in the higher concerns of humanity.

Indeed, the very best of us are too apt to "play fast and loose" with our minds, when spiritual questions come before us, and to give our adhesion to this view or that on very frivolous grounds. Said an Episcopal bishop to me one day: "'Tis wonderful how many ministers lie. They call things *certain*, when

there's no testimony for them ; and speak of them as *proved*, when they cannot be demonstrated ; and say they are matters of *knowledge*, when at best they are only guesses at truth." A serious charge it was, but he at least had weighed well the testimony for it. We are too apt in dealing with intellectual questions to dispense with evidence, and to think that "I believed" will always excuse the "having spoken." Nay, we even make a comparison between moral and legal certainty, which is quite disparaging to the former ; and we claim to be *morally* sure of something for which we have no *legal* evidence, and imply by our tone that, since we are only "morally" sure, we are not very positive after all. Be that as it may, no doubt exists as to the harm which follows loose talk upon those religious themes which affect the highest welfare of a soul ; and where duty, conduct, and character are concerned, it is not enough that your words should be justified by honest belief, the belief also must be justified by a careful study of the evidence within your reach.

And in the second place, to make the belief deserving of any high respect and to give it any claim to be heard in public speech, the evidence must be studied, as far as possible, not to support a preconceived opinion, but solely to ascertain the truth. "As far as possible," I say ; for, to a certain extent, we approach almost every religious question with the hope of finding that what we have always believed is true. We approach it as an advocate, therefore, rather than a judge, and as a natural consequence too often suffer an advocate's fate of simply strengthening our preconceived opinions

without gaining any new light upon the theme. He who is looking for something to support his position is very apt to see all that is in his favor and be blind to everything else.

Therefore, one should have regard not merely to the amount of evidence examined, but to the spirit in which the examination is made. He must come to it earnestly and prayerfully, with the wish to gain only the truth, cost what it may. Above all love of party triumph or denominational success, above all wish to appear consistent in the eyes of the world, above all desire to find something that shall be in his own favor, he must place this simple love for the truth, and pray that this, and this alone, may prevail. The nearer he gets to this frame of mind in which thoughts of self are buried beneath this eager desire to lay hold of the spiritual certainties God has revealed, the greater is the weight to be attached to his conclusions, and the greater his right to be heard when he believes and therefore speaks.

But, finally, the responsibility for belief goes farther than this in all religious questions, and reaches to the character. For what a man is determines the amount and kind of truth he is able to discover. There is a secret affinity between human souls and the realities of the universe; and what there is outside will not be clearly perceived, until there is something corresponding to it within. A man's character is his teacher; his life is his light; his religious spirit will guide him in his search for religious truth. There is no way by which one whose life is given up to lower pleasures and passions can read the mysteries of the

soul. Till his heart is fixed on better things, he cannot discern the presence of the divine. The realities of heaven are hidden from the worldly, and only the pure in heart can see God. Ah, there are truths hidden from the wise and prudent who are not trying to live aright, which yet are revealed to babes who creep, when they cannot walk, in the light of a holy life. He who shapes his conduct by the truth he clearly sees will have new revelations granted him, while new light streams from above upon his darkened path.

Would that I could make you comprehend the full responsibility for belief upon those lofty themes which engage our minds as we come to this church. So much depends on the correctness of belief (not on *all* subjects, but many), and so much harm may come from error, even when it is most honestly held, that we ought to make sure that we have fairly done our best to gain the truth. By the careful weighing of what evidence is in our reach, by the truth-loving spirit with which the search is made, and especially by that inward holiness without which the deep things of the spirit cannot be discerned, we must render our convictions truly worthy of being held in respect by ourselves and others. When we have done that, it may be we shall have a right for the first time to call the belief real and honest. Certainly, when we have done that, it will be the first time that we can justly say in the spirit of Paul, "We also believe, and therefore speak."

OCT. 19, 1879.

XI.

THE OAK AND THE ACORN.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, . . . which indeed is the least of all seeds; but, when it is grown, it . . . becometh a tree."—MATT. xiii., 31, 32.

THE mustard-seed, slowly transformed by the Providence of God into the mustard-tree, furnished the Master with *his* illustration of the way in which the kingdom of heaven is to be established on the earth. The acorn transformed into the oak furnishes *us* with *our* illustration of the same event. The names are changed, but only for the sake of driving one and the same truth more forcibly home to the mind. For the acorn helps us realize, as the mustard-seed did the men of old, that mystery of growth by which each created thing has its beginning hidden way back, out of sight in God, and then slowly comes into our field of view, where it develops so much meaning, beauty, and power, as time goes on, that we can set no limits to what it may become in the great hereafter. A mystery it is, and doubtless ever will be, to these finite minds of ours; and yet some of its secrets are readily yielded up to the thoughtful observer who traces with careful eyes the outward changes through which the acorns of former years have become the oaks of to-day.

And the first grand secret is that there's a *law* of

growth, so active that it is never a "dead letter," so potent that it can never be broken; a *law* of growth which turns acorns into oaks, but never into elms or maples, walnuts or chestnuts. In the long series of natural transformation, there is no element of caprice or waywardness. The onward movements have not *happened*, and the forward steps were not taken by *chance*. An irresistible power which knows no faltering has presided over these developments, and led the whole creation on "from glory to glory," each thing in its own order. You take up in the spring-time a handful of seeds so nearly alike that only the practised eye can tell them apart, and plant them in your garden. They rest in the same soil, are warmed by the same sun, are refreshed by the same rain and dew, and have their tender shoots fanned by the same breeze; but, in spite of being thus subjected to the same outward influences or environments, they begin to build themselves up into plants upon the most widely different plans from the very first moment of their showing signs of life. This one will always make lance-shaped leaves, that wedge-shaped or heart-shaped. *This* invariably smooths off the edges of its leaves, and *that* is just as careful to have them serrated. Here is one which, out of all the materials at its disposal, never manufactures a leaf that is not smooth and compact; and there is another which on every occasion divides the leaf into three lobes or five. So, too, if you look beneath the surface to the internal structure, you will find that one is busily engaged from morning till night, throughout the season, in turning the elements of earth and air into deadly poison, while another, close at its side, is

equally active in storing up food for the health and strength of humanity. And all these are governed by so immutable a law that not a seed, though so small you can scarcely see it, and so light the faintest breath will blow it away, will make a mistake in doing its appointed work; and your books will tell you, before you plant it, what sort of roots and leaves, flowers and fruit, it will put forth, and what kind of virtue will go out of it, when it is applied to human uses. Mustard-trees from mustard-seeds, oaks from acorns, that is the unchanging law, however mysterious it still remains; and when we find ourselves repeating the apostolic idea, that God gives to each kind of seed just such a body as he pleases, we must not forget that he always pleases to give to each kind on every occasion the same body, which differs in some respects from what he gives to any other.

There is then a law of growth in accordance with which all development takes place. As 'it is seen in the transformation of the acorn into the oak, so it is clearly discernible in the changes the earth has undergone from the primeval chaos depicted by geologists to the landscape beauty which our artists love to paint. Science and theology have vied with each other in pointing out the growth of the world from what it was to what it is. Both together have also borne witness to the orderly way in which the evolution has taken place, so that each new step, instead of being capricious and wayward, has led on from the good to the better, and is leading on to the best. Both together, therefore, bear witness not merely to an ever-present power, but to an ever-present wisdom and intelligence

as well. For no chances or happenings could have made all these steps tend upward and onward toward higher beauty and worth; but a guiding, controlling thought must have kept the reins of power, and turned every forward movement into the direction of the general welfare. Creation itself, therefore, has been nothing but an orderly growth through obedience to unchanging laws. As it was begun by an intelligent power, so it has been carried on by the same from who can tell how small beginnings to who can tell how grand results? It is no one act of past ages, but a perpetual process which brings forth something new with every ticking of the clock. So what John declared in his island prison, each of us may say concerning every morning of our lives,—“I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”

Now, this growth of the acorn into the oak, or of the earthly chaos that *was* into the earthly beauty that *is*, is fully matched by the growth of Christianity. Surely, it is in pure thoughtlessness that we ever wish to roll back the wheels of time, and bring the Christian Church to what it was in the earliest ages. Christianity is now a tree of life whose branches offer us a grateful shade, whose fruits nurture our highest virtues, and whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations. Shall we wish it all to fade from our sight, and become what it once was, nothing but a seed, and “the least of all seeds” too? Christianity is a river, sweeping with a mighty current through the world, changing the wilderness into a garden, turning the busy wheels of charity, and floating down whole argosies of blessings to enrich mankind; and shall we

ask to have it sink into the ground and become what it was at first, a little fountain bubbling up from the earth among the hills of Palestine? Christianity is feeling now the fuller strength of its maturity, and is grappling with the deepest problems of life and the stoutest foes of humanity; shall we give up all we have learned and all we have done, and, drawing in our forces from every new position won in eighteen centuries, meet in our second childhood, as we did in the first, in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, "through fear of the Jews"?

The Christianity of the nineteenth century is but the oak of which the Christianity of the first century was the acorn, and whatever changes have taken place must be referred to the divine law of growth. Through all the ages, its indwelling spirit has been the same. Love to God and love to man are still the two great commandments on which the rest depend. Jesus is still the ideal of that perfect manhood, which in its most exalted state blends so fully with the divine that you cannot draw a dividing line between them; for he who was most truly the son of man was also most truly the son of God. So little have the fundamental principles of Christianity changed that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" can make *us* also free from sin and death; and yet all this while the spirit is putting on new forms to meet the new needs of humanity. Thus, for example, the earnest love for the truth, which marked the immediate followers of Christ, has remained with unabating power; but, while in early times it led to speculations about countless æons proceeding from the eternal Father, it is busy to-day in

learning those mysteries of evolution by which countless species have proceeded from that which was in the beginning. It keeps the same devotion to moral precepts; but whereas those meant once a patient submission to tyrants, except in cases of positive sin,—for you see in the New Testament how largely that entered into all moral teachings then,—they stand now for free states, free thoughts, free speech, free schools, and everything that can accelerate human progress toward the highest and best. It still speaks the word of wisdom which God places on its lips; but it is a word which varies somewhat every year with the changing needs of the world. For the Christian pulpit is something more than a sounding-board to re-echo another's words. It has also a voice of its own, with which it must speak as it is moved by the Holy Spirit. The very fact that our religion has a living spirit in it will make it keep on growing to larger measures of truth and a fuller performance of duty.

The first secret, therefore, which is revealed to us concerning this mystery of growth is that it proceeds according to inexorable *law*, which excludes all elements of caprice or chance, and causes the acorn, if it becomes anything, to become an oak,—just that and nothing more. But there is a second secret no less important than this to be mastered; for when you see, whether in material or spiritual things, how the tiny seed of long ago becomes the great tree of to-day, you cannot keep back the question, “Was this magnificent growth all contained in the little germ?” It is a question often answered in the affirmative, when one is speaking of

the Christian religion, "the tree of life"; and it leads at once to our second affirmation upon the subject,— *the acorn does not contain the whole oak.*

In material things, one can very easily convince himself as to the truth of this assertion. Let him try the experiment in his own garden. Let him plant the same kind of seeds year after year and gather in all the harvest, adding nothing to the soil as time goes on. Then let him mark at last, what even the most thoughtless man cannot be blind to, how poor his garden is beginning to look, how spindling the growth, how scanty the harvest, till by and by the grass is not worth cutting, the wheat will not pay for reaping or the fruit for gathering. The very best of seeds may be put into the ground in the spring-time, and the most wretched of crops meet the eyes in the fall. And why? Simply because the corn you have raised was not all in the corn you planted, but also drew to itself from earth and air every particle of nourishment it could turn into corn. Had you carefully analyzed the soil at the beginning and then at the end of the series of years, you would see a marked loss in certain of its elements, and know that so much had been put into the crop that was not in the seed. So the oak, which shelters you from the scorching sun of a summer noon means an acorn indeed that was dropped there in the ground years ago; but it means, also, an acorn *plus* all it could gain from soil and air, rain and dew. Yes, the oak is on one side of the equation, and on the other is the acorn *plus* the bounties of nature and the providences of God.

So, too, is it with that kingdom of heaven whose

growth is likened by the gospel to that of a tree. This Christianity of ours sprang from the seed which Jesus sowed more than eighteen hundred years ago; and, in all its outward changes, it obeys that mysterious law which forces every seed to grow up into its own body, and never once allows the mustard to become a fig-tree or the acorn an elm. But to say that it was all contained in the seed is a vague figure of speech, which is sure to mislead. With all our gratitude to the sower who, in that early spring-time of our faith, went forth to sow what had been given him from the heavenly storehouse,—and it is a gratitude which cannot be easily measured,—we must not forget those who in subsequent ages have watered the field, and Him who in all ages has given the increase. For think of what has been added to this religion in that lapse of time. Think how it has been adorned with beauty and grace by artists and poets. Think how it has been enriched by the new discoveries of philosophers, theologians, and scientists. Think how it has been enlarged by every new communication which the spirit of God has made to the spirit of man. Not unaided and alone has it reached its present proportions. Saints have prayed for it; students have studied for it; heroes have fought for it; martyrs have died for it; missionaries have carried it about over land and sea, to declare its excellence to every creature; confessors have in its behalf witnessed a good confession; while those brothers of mercy and sisters of charity who have shown us what it is to live as members of the household of God have so manifested the faith as to commend it to the best parts of human nature. How could it help grow-

ing strong, when so many have given it the strength of their manhood and womanhood? How could it help growing rich in spiritual worth, when all along through the ages it has received the thoughts of the best thinkers and the deeds of the best workers? Truly, the word of Christianity was the seed, and the best seed ever sent by the divine husbandman; but to claim in any literalness of speech that it contained the whole of that Christianity in which we now rejoice is to ignore the countless thousands of Christian souls who have been fellow-laborers with Christ, and to leave out of reckoning the daily providences of God.

Heaven be thanked for the acorn, but also for the sunshine, soil, and air, which help the oak become what it is! Heaven be thanked for the fountain whence the stream proceeds, but also for the heavy rains and gentle dews which swell the stream, and turn it into the mighty river by which humanity's thirst is quenched! Thanks without number for the gospel of him who first proclaimed among men the good news of God, but also for the apostles and holy ones of that and the following ages, who repeated the words of Christ to dull ears which had not caught them, and who lived a Christ-like life and died a Christ-like death! For Christianity is like a seed which becomes a tree by drawing unto itself whatever good it finds in the earth beneath or in the heavens above.

And on this Sunday morning, when we cannot help thinking of last Thursday's anniversary which filled the vestry with happy hearts and voices, shall we not make a more personal application of the subject? We planted an acorn in Winchester about thirteen years

ago, and a live oak is growing from it to-day. But the oak we long to see was not all in that little acorn: the church that shall be, as we trust, the glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish, was not all in the nucleus then formed. It needs the helping influence of our best thoughts and prayers, deeds and lives. It needs the most quickening words the minister can speak, the highest truth his mind can grasp, the best results he can bring back from studying the sacred writings of the past, and the newest word he can catch from the spirit which is to be with loving hearts even unto the end of the world. It needs the best of lives from the people,—the purity of their hearts, the helpfulness of their conduct, and the nobility of their characters. Yes, it needs the ordained minister who has been called to his post by the still small voice of God no less than by the loud acclamations of the people; but with him must be what Mr. Clarke rightly calls an “ordained laity,”—the men and women (ay, and children, too) whom God has ordained to his service and has drawn together, that they may hear what the spirit says to the churches, and may embody that word in lives where it can be seen, read, and loved by all. An “ordained laity,” whose feet tread only the paths of Christian duty, whose hands do only the work which the Father gives them to do, whose lips speak only the words of Christian truth and gentleness, and who in the worthiness of their lives take their place among those of whom the apostle said, “Ye are the body of Christ,”—that is one of the essential requirements, without which the whole building cannot be fitly

framed together or grow to be a holy temple of the Lord. We have had many such ordained laymen and women who have helped the Church pass on from what it was to what it is ; and if, by God's grace and your co-operation, we can have them in larger numbers still and fuller consecration, the Church will continue to grow from what it is to what we long to have it be. We must be "laborers together with God."

Not to one special soul or class of souls does the lesson come, but to each of us and all. It is among the greatest of all mistakes, when one refuses to do the little which is in his power because he cannot do the much which is out of his power ; for, in truth, no one is so weak and weary, so busy or poor, that he cannot aid in transforming the acorn into the oak. The most trivial act of duty will prove a tiny drop which helps make up the refreshing shower. The man of one talent must use it for the Church as faithfully as he who has two or five. The widow's two mites, which alone she can spare from her necessities, may be cast into the treasury with the assurance that they will be helpful to the world. And if there is a child here who can offer nothing more than the lad who brought to Jesus "five barley loaves and two small fishes," even *that* simple offering, through the grace of God, will do something toward supplying the wants of suffering humanity. With such a spirit in pastor and people, parents and children, the Church "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season. Its leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever it doeth shall prosper."

THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I.

"The rock that is higher than I."—PSALM lxi., 2.

SELF-CONTROL is an all important factor in self-improvement. The more effectually we master what we have, the more readily we gain what still is lacking. Never to be *below* ourselves through the dead weight of grovelling desires, never to be *beside* ourselves through the vehemence of eager passions, but always to be ourselves, whether that means high or low, good or ill,—this is the essential condition of human progress. It is the gathering in of our goods and the packing away of every valuable where it belongs, that precedes the journey into new lands in search of greater treasures. It is the summoning of the forces, the arming and training of them, the marshalling of them in battle array, the bringing of them all into instant obedience to their leader's slightest word, that comes before the onward march to new and higher victories. Little hope is there of the most worthy progress till something of this is done; for he only who has been faithful over the few things is promised the position of ruler over many things. Show me one who is master of the present situation, who never loses his temper nor utters a word which he repents of as soon as it

passes his lips, who never is driven by anger to inflict a blow which he regrets forever after, who never is led by appetites to an indulgence which fills him with lasting shame, who never is dragged by runaway passions, so long uncontrolled as to be almost uncontrollable, into any of the by-paths of sin and folly from which it is so hard to return to the highway of strict integrity,—show me, I say, one who is so far master of the present situation that he does nothing which his real self hates and revolts from, and I will recognize him as armed, equipped, and all ready for a new campaign. But whoso has not learned to conquer himself will sigh in vain for grand achievements in conquering other realms.

Yet many who have sought this self-control with a brave spirit and resolute will have sadly failed of reaching it. Every new year has seen its best resolutions made, and every old year seen them broken. Now, in our thoughtful moments, we fasten the passions with a leash, and hold them well in hand; but, by and by, in thoughtless moments, they slip away and course over the forbidden fields. 'Tis poor comfort to bid such a one simply to try again! He has tried so often, fought so hard, meant to do so well, and yet has done so poorly! Why *should* he make good resolutions to-day when those of yesterday have so completely failed?

Therefore, we ought to see that the reason for this failure often lies not in the lack of hard fighting with the evil habits, but in the plan of the campaign. It is because a man has met the vices on their own low level and tried to overcome them by sheer force of will,

that he is often defeated, just as he would be if he attacked any wild beast of the forest in that way. What but speedy death would he expect, who should meet a lion or tiger on such terms,—matching his hands and feet against the limbs which nature gave the brute? Even the savage knows too much for that, and meets these still more savage enemies by using a spiritual power they do not have. He calls into exercise his highest reasoning and inventive skill to feather his arrow, sharpen his hatchet, and point his lance, so as to give him every advantage in the contest and atone for his inferior strength. And we, in this warfare with our vices, this desperate struggle for self-control, must call higher powers to our aid, and meet these enemies of our peace with weapons they cannot wield. We must assail them from high vantage ground, and not on their own low level where they so often prove the stronger; and, then, we shall find that, while evil can frequently break down the will in a mere hand to hand fight, it will not be able to overcome those who have taken their stand on a firm religious principle,—“The rock that is higher than I.”

Yes, you must climb up higher than yourself, in order to conquer and control yourself. As long as one's thoughts centre wholly on himself and are directed merely to his own good and his own improvement, he is almost sure to be defeated in his struggle with besetting faults. He has no motive strong enough to make him (in New Testament language) “resist unto blood in his strivings against sin”; for that self-love, which makes him seek his own best interests, is no match for any of the passions which gain control of

the human heart. He will do what he knows by sad experience will hurt body, mind, or soul, and what he has called himself time and again "fool" for doing, even if he would resent another's calling him so; yet, still, he will keep on doing it through the strength of the desire which urges him on, and the weakness of the only motive which prompts him to resist. Defeat is almost sure to come on that low level where nothing else is sought than our own best interests and pleasures, and victory will seldom be achieved till a higher principle of action has been gained.

In one of those violent storms which rise on Lake Michigan, a propeller sprang a leak, and was about to sink. Passengers and crew alike were summoned to the pumps, and all responded readily save one sea-sick man, who kept to his state-room through the whole alarm, and did not care what happened. Rousing up enough to know he would probably drown in a few minutes, he merely kept his dizzy head still on the pillow, and wished the vessel would make haste and go to the bottom; for he was so sea-sick, he would as lief die as live. But, just then, the state-room door flew open, and the black stewardess stood there looking at him with utter disgust, and saying with sneering tones, "What, forty men and women drowning, and a man here doing nothing!" He sprang to the floor in an instant, the sickness all gone,—worked at the pumps, as did all the rest, till completely exhausted; and the steamer was saved. He who could not stir hand or foot, while thinking merely of himself, could do anything needful, when awakened to the thought that forty men and women required his aid. So often, on this ocean

of life, you will find mariners tossed about by the storms of passions, and doing nothing effectual for their own deliverance till a higher motive than any self-love takes command of them, and makes them work out their salvation.

Then "lead me to the rock that is higher than I" must be the prayer of every soul. There is a whole host of temptations assailing us at every step. Their sleepless eyes are watching the first exposure of our hearts. They know where our defences are the weakest ; and, if ever the strong human will on which we have been relying should slumber, they know that too. When, for a moment, we unlace our armor to seek some relaxation, they make their fiercest assaults ; and, where the joints of our "harness" are not well knit together, their flying darts soon find the narrow opening. Down on the level of those temptations is incessant, if not disastrous, warfare ; and we shall not fully master all these enemies of our peace till we gain and hold the heights which command the plains below.

Yet not vices alone, but sorrows, beset us on every side. They rush upon us like a flood of mighty waters, and threaten to engulf our souls. Who can stem the tide ? Who can pass through it, and not be borne down among the rocks and rapids ? In loss of property, reputation, and friends, in sickness and bereavement, in the long list of calamities and afflictions which come to our ears or fall to our lot, where can any refuge be found ? The waves of misfortune will break over us and sweep us far away, unless we can find a foothold above the flood to which our souls can flee.

Such a refuge there is in that allegiance to God

which makes us lay hold of him as he has already laid hold of us; and, through that contact, divine power flows in to supply the needs of human weakness. There is a love for God which can grow to be so absorbing and supreme as to keep every heart throb in unison with it. There is a loyalty to the eternal righteousness which can become so devoted that no usurping passion in the breast shall ever dare lift up the standard of revolt. And all this loving, loyal recognition of the divine, as something to be thought of, loved, obeyed, is that religion which takes us out of ourselves and makes us find our truest life in God. The eager reaching up to that religion, and the steadfast holding on to it, is the only remedy for private, social, and national evils. It is the only way of conquering the faults which yield to no other power. Partly, the secret of its success in gaining for us that self-control which no purely moral efforts sufficed to give, comes from the fact that religion goes directly to the root of the matter by beginning with the heart of man. It does not pick open his budding virtues and arrange their delicate petals with careful hand, but applies nourishment to the roots, and envelops the whole in an atmosphere of genial light and heat. It does not wait to lop off the flowers and fruits of vice as soon as they appear; but it strikes right down to the very source of all evil, in accordance with the Master's saying,—“Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.” To deal simply with *human actions* is to spend your time in turning the hands of your watch to keep them at the exact hour and minute,—a hopeless task, to which there will be

no end ; but to deal with human *thoughts* and *principles* is to search the springs of motion, and do in one day a work which may last for years. Dr. Franklin sought the mastery of his nature by making out a list of all the virtues he wished to gain, and devoting a week's attention to each one in its turn ; but that system, in spite of its benefits, raised up as many hostile armies as there are vices in the breast, while religion, concentrating all her forces, hurls selfishness, the king of vices, from the throne, and all the rebellious forces begin to melt away.

But the chief secret of its success must be sought, as before hinted at, in the new and stronger motive it brings to bear upon the life. The heart which has begun to love God will consecrate itself to his service, and delight to do whatever is pleasing in his sight. Every form of virtue will be an object of eager desire ; and every form of vice will be odious to it, because odious to the Father who is in heaven. The old commands of "ought" and "ought not" will come to it with tenfold authority, because no longer looked on as expressions of eternal *power* alone, but also of eternal *goodness* ; and thus, in the ardor of a heaven-born love, a man overcomes the passions which would not yield to hopes, fears, or anything which related wholly to himself. It needs this new and higher desire to master the lower ones which have so long held sway.

And, after all, what is this but saying that, in the great family of man, as in our separate households, discord, violence, and every form of wrong among the children are cured by an increased love for the common Father of all. Who has not seen its operation in the

house? Troubles and dissensions arise at times among those who ought to be most firmly united in mutual confidence. Misunderstandings creep in, envyings and jealousies show themselves. Rights will be clung to with too much tenacity, or the rights of others trampled on with utter recklessness. In sudden moments of passion, bitter words will be spoken, which repentance cannot call back, and angry blows given, for which repentance cannot easily atone. Then, when hateful feelings are glaring out of eyes which should have beamed with love, a heavy stroke of affliction falls on the dear parents who have watched over the children so tenderly; on the father, who has toiled so faithfully and struggled so well to give them a happy home; on the mother, who has cared for them so constantly and borne with them so patiently since the days of helpless infancy; and this, by awakening all their filial love, draws together the hearts which were fast becoming estranged, and leads each one to seek a reconciliation. And so it ever is with respect to the hatred, injustice, and other evil feelings we cherish toward our fellow-men. Very bitter we become at times, so that we do gross violence to those on whom we would take revenge; and very selfish, also, at times, so that we are ready to trample on any right or inflict any wrong, if only we can gratify our evil desires. But, the very moment we begin to love God with a pure heart fervently, a sincere love for man also springs up in the breast. Then, the sinful passions flee away, and we shrink in abhorrence from the deeds we were committing. The very desire for evil vanishes, and we long henceforth to bless and curse not. Every step we take

toward the heavenly Father brings us nearer each other in all mutual interest and kind regard ; and the religion which calls out our love for God leads us away from doing wrong to man. Exceptional cases there undoubtedly are, where men of a very conscientious nature deal very justly toward each other without any sense of the divine ; but never for any long time, as I read history, has a people kept up a pure and true morality, unless the springs of its being were fed by a genuine religious sentiment.

Then climb to the rock that is higher than yourself, if you would fully master and control yourself. Set your affections on things which are above. Look up, rise up. Seek the religious life of aspiration toward the highest and loyalty to the best. All down below that is the life of practical atheism, whatever be the name by which it is called. For real atheism is not a mere speculation about the first cause of all things or about the way in which the universe came into being : it is, as Martineau has so well shown, the living in and for one's self, without any holy aspirations. It is making himself the object for which he labors, and himself, rich or great, the central picture in all his dreams. It is making self the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of existence, the point from which all things start, and in which they terminate. There is no religion in all that, whatever the sectarian name by which a man is called or the church he attends or the creed he signs. "He worships nothing, he serves nothing. If God were away and heaven were not, it would make no difference to him, he would never miss them. His life is godless. He is an atheist." *

* Martineau.

But no life need be like that. Something that it can revere is revealed to every soul that will but look for it; and, in maintaining a perfect allegiance to that, we shall know what true religion is. Very faintly that high ideal may shine upon us at first, a faint gleam of light through the rifts in the clouds; but, as we press on toward it, eagerly and promptly, it will beam upon us with brighter radiance, and we shall know it is the light of our home. Very feebly the voice which calls us upward may sound at first, scarcely more than a whisper, just heard among the deafening noises of the world; but whoso gladly obeys it, and springs forward at the summons, hears it soon, full and sweet above all others, and knows it to be the one voice to follow in the whole universe of sounds. Very narrow and dubious at first the upward path may seem, with the mind uncertain, the footsteps painful, and the progress slow; but, as fast as we advance, it clears up before our vision, the heavy fogs which hung around it vanish, and our path is as the dawning light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Little do we know of God, when we begin to love and serve him; and very little shall we ever know of him, until after we have loved and served him. But if, with the first sense of loyalty to the infinite power we so vaguely understand, and of devotion to the infinite goodness we so vaguely appreciate, we let our hearts go out to him and pledge our hands to the doing of his will, those shadowy outlines will grow so distinct with each day's righteous living that, when we hear the Master's voice say, "Ye believe in God," we shall reply, with full assurance of faith, "*We do believe in God.*"

Religious certainty comes from religious living. We shall no longer be found down in the dust and mire, sadly struggling with ourselves, or still more sadly contented with ourselves and not even struggling, if we would first but offer in all sincerity the prayer, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I," and then, with the strength which God has given, would climb up as far and as fast as we can.

JAN. 18, 1877.

XIII.

UNITARIAN AFFIRMATIONS.

"Those things which are most surely believed among us." — LUKE i., 1.

MR. EMERSON in one of his recent utterances takes occasion to speak of what he is pleased to call "the pale negations of Unitarianism." The words were at once seized upon by many writers, who declared that they also found more of the negative than positive in our denominational books, and that it was easier to tell what Unitarians denied than what they affirmed, far easier to tell what we do *not* believe than what we *do* believe. Now, there would be very little profit in discussing this charge to see whether it is true or false; for it relates to sermons already preached and books already written, and no amount of discussion will alter the fact. If those books and sermons are made up chiefly of negations, our defence of them will not alter the fact; and, if they are made up of affirmations (as I believe them to be), they will retain those affirmations in spite of all charges to the contrary. All that I am concerned about is that every person in Winchester who wishes to know what Unitarianism is, should have an opportunity of learning "those things which are most surely believed among us." For, whatever may be true or false of some others who bear the same

denominational name, this has been *my* ardent desire ever since I occupied this pulpit; and as it led ten years ago to the writing and printing of those twelve Winchester lectures,—*Letter and Spirit*,—so it leads to this sermon to-day.

Yet, before making a partial list of Unitarian affirmations,—for of course it must be partial, since it would take all the Sundays of the year to tell the whole,—it may be well to say, with regard to Mr. Emerson's utterances, that the critics who have echoed his *words* have failed, as echoes generally do, to discern his *meaning*. There is nothing blameworthy in bringing denials and negations into books and sermons. Whether you shall deny one statement or assert the opposite is often a mere matter of taste, grammar, rhetoric,—a choice between two ways of conveying your idea. The negative form of stating your position may carry the strongest conviction with it at times, and prove the speediest way of overturning long-established error. It is often the shortest, boldest, most uncompromising form, and, therefore, in such cases is the best. To find fault with it on the score of grammar, because it says, "You are not right," instead of saying, "You *are* wrong," is a wretched piece of criticism, unworthy a serious-minded man. Who criticises the grammar of the ten commandments? And they are almost all negations. Thou shalt not have other gods, shalt not worship idols, not take the holy name in vain, not work on the Sabbath, not kill, not commit adultery, not steal, not covet,—*those* are the negations of the Decalogue; and, when you erase them from the tables of the law, it is very little you have left. Or, if you apply the

same criticism to the words of Jesus, it would be with a like result ; for among the utterances which echo down the line of ages and ring in our hearts to-day are those strong negations which he continually used : "Swear not at all," "Judge not," "Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them," "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites," "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," "Take therefore no anxious thought for the morrow." And if these should be dropped out of the New Testament, on the childish plea that religion should be positive, not negative, and make affirmations, not denials, how very small this book, already so little, would become ! The simple fact is that a wise teacher employs either the positive or negative form of speech, according to his belief as to which will be the most efficacious. While he says at one time, "Tell the truth, and the whole truth," he may say at another, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Our early teachers, therefore, were but walking in the footsteps of the Master when they brought so many denials, negations, and prohibitions into their books and sermons ; and Mr. Emerson had not the least intention of blaming them for it, even if some critics, in re-echoing his words, have supposed that this was his purpose.

No : there is no harm in "negations," but only in "*pale* negations." It is their "pallor," as some one has said, not their grammatical form, that is at fault. A clear, strong denial which goes down to the depths, like a subsoil plough, and tears up all the roots of error, has nothing blameworthy in it ; and denial becomes a sin only when it is weak, timid, faltering, half-hearted, and conveys the impression that it is not

very much in earnest after all. The world needs stern negations, as strong and uncompromising as the "Thou shalt not" of the ten commandments, but wants no stammered ones from frightened lips, no "*pale* negations," which have no hot life-blood in them, and therefore no glow of enthusiasm in assailing error, no flush of indignation in attacking wrong. Some men rob their denials and prohibitions of all force by making them in an apologetic tone, which seems to beg the world's pardon for differing from it; and then, whatever their denominational name,—for the fault is by no means confined to one set of preachers,—they make the word of God of no effect by their timidity. A New England minister, *not* of our faith, preached seven Sundays as a candidate in a Baltimore pulpit before the war, and received an invitation to settle there as pastor, with the understanding, the committee wrote, that he should continue to avoid all allusion to slavery, as he had during that time. He wrote back in great surprise to say that seven of his fourteen sermons had been preached directly against their "peculiar institution," and received for a reply that that was the first they ever knew of that fact: they had heard all his sermons, and had not noticed a single denial of their right to own slaves. Must he not have made some very "*pale* negations"? The fault is in the half-hearted way of making the denial,—in its timid spirit, not its grammatical form; as though you should say to a young man, "Would it not be more prudent for you not to indulge your love of stimulants so much?" instead of saying, "Touch not, taste not, handle not"; or should say, "Do not be too intimate with people who will lead you astray," instead

of, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men,—avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Why, years ago, I heard a lad say to his brother, "Don't swear so much," which was a very pale negation when compared with the gospel words, "Swear *not at all*." For we ought ever to bear in mind that, whether we affirm or deny, we should do it so clearly and boldly that no one will ever doubt again the meaning of our words or the earnestness of our belief.

What, then, are "those things which are most surely believed among us"?

I. The first, of course, to be mentioned is that which gained for our Church its Unitarian name,—
"To us there is but one God, the Father." Deeply as we revere the name of Jesus, as one "whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,"—we never place him on an equality with the Supreme Being, but speak of him always and only as the holy child of God. We yield to none in reverence for his character, love for his goodness, and gratitude for all he did; but we never offer to him our prayers, nor pay him divine worship, for he is not the Creator, but one of the created, not the heavenly Father, but our heavenly brother. What authority he has over us is that of a *messenger*, who brings glad tidings from one higher than himself. It is the authority of a *teacher*, who has mastered the science whose alphabet we have just begun to study; of a *guide*, who has been over the way so unfamiliar to us; of a *pilot*, who is acquainted with the rocks and shoals where we

might have been wrecked; of the *spiritual leader*, who, having reached heavenly places, calls down to us from the upper heights, "This is the way, walk ye in it." We believe him, and believe *in* him, as one whose teaching and life have power to draw us up to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; but our highest homage is always given to the Being whom Jesus himself adored and obeyed. For "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," he says, "and him only shalt thou serve."

We believe then in *one God*, who fills the universe with his presence, and is the life and light of all things. The laws of nature are but expressions of his will, and merely show the way in which he rules the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth. All things were called into being by him, and are upheld by his mighty power; for "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." So he holds the sea in the hollow of his hand. He guides the whirlwind, and directs the storm. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice, and nothing can come to either one of us except by his permission and under his control.

And this one God is, in the truest sense, a Father. We use that word which Jesus so often employed, without any restriction whatever as to its meaning. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." As a father watcheth over his children with impartial love, so the Lord "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." As a father corrects a child's faults, not in anger, but mercy, so the

Lord chastens us, not for his pleasure, but our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. As a father welcomes back a penitent child to the paternal home, so the Lord sees the returning prodigal while yet he is a great way off, and has compassion on him, and folds him in the embrace of his love. Unqualifiedly, without any limitations, he is the Father of the whole human race, and should receive the supreme love of our hearts and the highest service of our lives.

II. And, secondly, we most surely believe that man's highest duty, no less than his highest privilege, is to love and serve this heavenly Father. It is sometimes said that the Unitarian creed is so lax that it allows each man to do about as he wants to. On the contrary, it is so rigid that it enjoins each man to do exactly what God wants him to,—just that, and nothing less. Therefore, to every man, reason and conscience have been given, that he may learn the duty which is binding upon him; and however he learns it, whether from the experience of life, or the precepts of holy men, or the teachings of the spirit, he is to accept it as a solemn obligation, and perform it with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Especially do we maintain that religion is confined to no limited circle within the broad sweep of existence, but is co-extensive with life itself. It is not limited to churches and Bibles, prayers and sermons alone, but extends to the commonest act of the commonest life, by demanding that, whether we eat or drink, we shall do it to the glory of God. Whatever law is written on the constitution of our natures is as binding upon us as though the heavens should

open, and a voice from the unseen glories should reach our ears. For physical laws are as truly religious as those which we term spiritual, and every act of vicious indulgence is a sin against God no less than folly toward ourselves. The highest aim of every human being should be to keep in the path of duty, that so he may glorify God in the body and spirit which are given him. For our creed is to do not what *we* want, but what God wants. Not our will, but his, be done!

III. But, as some are not doing exactly what God wants, we teach the certainty of divine retributions. Sooner or later, misery follows sin by an inexorable law which never changes. No earthly cunning can avert it, no earthly power can prevent it. Whoever violates a single law of God, whether it be a law of body, mind, or soul, a law taught in the Bible or by the experience of life, must pay the penalty of his misdeed, since every act of transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward. I remember that, when I first preached that truth in its most absolute form, a good lady remarked, as she left the church: "That's a hard doctrine. Why, according to that, even we *church members* have got to answer for our sins!" True; but had she not read in her Bible that Moses was punished for *his* sin, and forbidden to enter the promised land? and Peter was punished for *his*, so that he went out and wept bitterly? For no certificate of church membership can ward off the consequences which God and nature have ordained from all eternity to be the penalty of wrong-doing; and, whatever else is doubtful as to the connection between the present and future, this at least is sure: that every one shall

receive according to the deeds done in the body, "whether they are good or whether they are evil."

But, while these consequences of wrong are its inevitable punishment, we believe them to be so wisely ordained as to remind us of duty and urge us to re-enter the way of obedience. It seems to us a fatal objection to the common theory of retribution, the doctrine of endless punishment, that confessedly it never reforms a single offender,—nay, more than that, it does not even *try* to reform him. Why, we call it a shame on our prison system that so often a criminal is no better at the end of his confinement than he was at the beginning; and what, then, can you say of the Almighty's prison-house, when a human soul can pass a whole eternity and never be redeemed from sin and changed into a holy child of God and heaven? Therefore, we most surely believe in the remedial nature of divine punishments. They are corrections to correct our faults. They are afflictions to drive us back from sinful ways into the paths of holiness. They are purifying fires to consume all the dross of our being, and leave only the pure soul which shall be fitted to dwell henceforth in the embrace of God's love. For, however grievous the divine chastening may be at the time, it afterward "yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby." No one who sins can escape the punishment; but that punishment is not the vengeance of an angry God who aims only at the infliction of pain forever and ever, it is the discipline of a wise father who would win us back to his love and service.

IV. In the fourth place, we believe in the *salvation*

of erring souls,—not that they can escape the penalty of sins already committed, but that they can be saved from the sins, and therefore from the new sorrows and miseries they would otherwise have brought on themselves. In such a salvation, everything is perfectly natural without the slightest taint of aught that is arbitrary or artificial. It is the soul's restoration to health after all the diseases of sin. It is the soul's deliverance from the bondage of vice and its entrance upon the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It stands for the soul's complete reformation and the attainment of a holy character, since he alone who loves and serves God is *saved*, because he alone is safe. A man is saved, when he becomes in spirit and life a faithful child of God, and only then. So we most surely believe. If, therefore, any of you have been accustomed to hear salvation spoken of as an arbitrary act of the Almighty, forgiving whom he will, as a pardon signed and sealed by him to release you from the ministers of justice, or as a passport to admit you to his presence, you will see how completely our idea is at variance with that; for we hold that every one who truly repents of sin and devotes himself henceforth to a holy life is thereby saved,—he, and he alone.

And so the question whether all men shall be saved is but another form of asking whether all shall repent of their sins and become the children of God. This we believe they will do. We have seen the power of good men, like Whitefield, and good women, like Sister Dora, to win human souls to the better life; and we cannot help trusting that the infinite wisdom of God will have ways to bring *all* his children home. He who has been

lifted up on the cross will at last draw all men unto him. Sooner or later, we believe, every soul will repent of its iniquities, and rise up to go unto its Father; and then, whenever and wherever it repents, here or hereafter, in the body or out of the body, on earth or in the spirit world, it will be welcomed back to the heavenly home and the Father's loving arms.

You see from this statement of the doctrine how little force is in the saying that, according to this idea, one can commit sin all his lifetime and go to heaven all the same. For no sinner can enter heaven *while he is a sinner*, no thief or murderer while he kills or steals, no slave of sensual passions or appetites while he is their slave; and, if ever he finds himself forgiven and taken into divine favor once more, it will be only when he has forsaken those and every sin, and begun to love the Lord with all his heart and serve him with all his might. Then, at last, he will be saved; for he will dwell in God and God in him. To be at one with God, perfectly trusting and perfectly trusted, that is complete salvation.

V. Finally, the immortality of the soul is one of those things which are most surely believed among us. If we say less about it than some others do, it is because we make less distinction than some others between the "life which now is" and "that which is to come," inasmuch as we believe in only one, continuous, immortal life, beginning with our birth on the earth, but never ending. Death produces no radical change in our characters, but just what we are when we fall asleep on earth we are when we awake in the world beyond. There, we shall reap the harvest of

much which we sowed on earth, and find joy or sorrow awaiting us, according to our fidelity here.

But, while we enter the life to come with the same characters we bear on leaving this, there is still, in this thought of immortality, infinite hope for man. Infinite hope, surely, for those who pass away in their sins. Trials, sufferings, punishments, will come to them for who can tell how long; but come and stay they will, until the sin is rooted out, and all the dross of the nature is consumed by the purifying fires. Then, a new opportunity for progress will be given them. They will be delivered from the temptations which come to them through bodily appetites, and many a one who now stumbles and falls before those besetting faults will go rejoicingly along his way. They can reach out for the virtues they did not gain on earth, and learn the lessons of truth they did not master here. A new chance will be offered to rise up out of all transgression; and so, at last, they may find the homeward way, and enter into the joy of their Lord.

And how much hope there must be for the faithful who pass out of earth with hearts already filled with love for God and man! Death for them is the messenger who releases them from a feeble, sickly body which has become through disease a prison house, and ushers them into a new career of happiness and duty. There, they will find relief from their weariness, and, being renewed in strength, will enter zealously upon fresh labors in the heavenly Father's service. Unbounded scope for progress lies before them; and their eager spirits will ever find new truth to learn, new work to do. Higher and higher, they can climb the

mount of excellence, and rise nearer and still nearer to the measure of the stature of the perfect child of God. Surely, with this glorious hope for the departed, we would not call them to earthly scenes, but rather would fit ourselves to join them in that heavenly state, and spend an endless day with them in "his presence where is fulness of joy, at his right hand where are pleasures forevermore."

You see, then, that Unitarians believe in one God, the Father, who teaches us, through his holy child Jesus and his holy spirit, that obedience to him is the only road to happiness, as it is the only duty; that to be at one with him in filial trust and love is salvation on earth, and will be everlasting peace and joy in heaven. We may differ in certain other things, but these at least are most surely believed among us.

OCT. 17, 1880.

Some letter drift
det.

XIV.

SOUL-DRIFTING.

“Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind.” — EPH. iv., 14.

“SOUL-DRIFTING” is my subject. You as well as I have seen souls which seem to be anchored in no safe harbor, and sailing to no wished-for port, but drifting idly and aimlessly about in a continuously changing course. “Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind;” swept forward by every current or whirled around by every eddy; blown helplessly along as dried leaves before September’s gale; sailing purposelessly about like floating spars on the waves; abandoned crafts, with neither chart nor compass, pilot nor rudder, aiming for no special place, keeping in no special channel, and carrying no special freight,—they are simply drifting souls.

You sit down on the beach, in your summer visit to the sea-side, and watch with mingled anxiety and curiosity a deserted boat which is tossing helplessly to and fro out there on the waters, with neither sails nor oars. “No matter,” says a thoughtless voice by your side: “it will fetch up somewhere, by and by, if we only wait long enough.” Yes, fetch up on the sands and be swamped, or on the rocks and be dashed to pieces. And, all along the coast, you will see the stranded hulls of ships that fetched up on the shore and are

slowly wasting away, and the grim-looking skeletons of others which are wedged in among the rocks as a warning to mariners ; while the old fishermen around you will tell tales of others still which did not fetch *up*, but *down*,—down to the bottom of the sea, with all their sunken treasure hidden from the eyes of men. So also are there human souls which break away from their old moorings of childhood's faith, and never reach the better faith of manhood, but drift helplessly into gloomy, troubled doubts,—break away from childhood's innocence, and, instead of laying hold of manly virtues, wander aimlessly about among the vices wherever a chance temptation leads ; and they break away from the purposes of childhood with its high hopes and heavenly visions, and never attain to the exaltation which comes from genuine service to humanity, but remain idle stragglers from the ranks, who never do anything good or great. "Fetch up somewhere," it may be, in doubt, temptation, idleness, shame ; and very fortunate, if they do not fetch *down* into the depths of vice where all the waves of bitterness and sorrow will break over them.

The inexperienced landsman on his first voyage sees no cause of alarm when the ship ceases to mind her helm, and begins to drift instead of sailing ; but the master knows right well the dire consequences that may follow, and the destruction that will sooner or later come, if she continues to toss in that purposeless way to and fro, and be carried about by every wind and current. So does the thoughtful man look with an anxiety which others cannot comprehend at the first symptom of this soul-drifting. It is not that any

great harm is done already, or any instant collision is to be feared, or any immediate wrecking to be dreaded. Just for the moment, the soul may be as quiet, safe, and happy as it ever was since its creation. But the keen spectator clearly enough discerns that he who is going nowhere in particular is very apt to find himself at last where he would not wish to be; and he who floats idly on the current may be caught by the rapids, dashed over the falls, and be swallowed up by the whirlpool; and he who lets the wind blow him "where it listeth" may find that it lists to blow him on the rocky coast where there are few chances of escape. Very pleasant it is, indeed, to give up all exertion for a while, and float down the stream without a thought or care, a feather in the wind, a leaf on the river; but a rude awakening is sure to come at last, though all too late, most frequently, to ward off the threatened danger. The mournful wrecking of human souls begins with their pleasant drifting.

For see how it works in almost every case. No one *means* to make shipwreck of all life's worth. No one deliberately turns his face in the downward road at the beginning, or says, "Evil, be thou my good." He does not look over the whole list of capital sins and minor faults, as he would over a hotel bill of fare, and select two or three pet indulgences with which to regale his soul, and pass by all the rest as not according with his taste. He would be very much less than a man, if he could coolly order a full supply of vanity, greed, or sensuality, and say that just those vices shall be his daily bread. Such a soul as that, purposely and wilfully picking out its self-indulgences beforehand

from the whole list of possible evils, has not been met with in all your experience, and will not be, though Methuselah's traditional age be yours. One *drifts* into habits before he has the least idea of becoming subject to them. He acquires a taste which he had no thought of acquiring at all. He glides into a fault unconsciously at first; and, though he may afterward sin with his eyes wide open to the enormity of what he is doing, his first knowledge of his fall from virtue surprises him even more than it does the looker-on. This ~~one~~^{man}, for example, never meant to be dishonest. He started in life as virtuous as others, and intended to preserve his integrity. But, somehow, he drifted into a little fault which at the time he scarcely noticed, and he told a little falsehood to conceal the little fault, and he swore a little oath to conceal his little falsehood, and he used a little violence to establish his little oath; and so the little fault involved him in the meshes of a great sin. ~~And another~~^{Then another} never meant to be swallowed up in self-indulgence. He drank, at first, but a few drops from the cup of pleasure, and then a few more to keep up the exhilaration, and then a little more still to cure the depression of spirits which the reaction had caused. So gradually was the mischief wrought that he never thought of losing self-control until he heard the warning cry, and found, to his amazement, that he could not rise at will, but must lie there helpless in his betrayer's lap,—a shorn giant to be henceforth mocked by enemies he used to despise. The mournful wrecking was from no deliberate purpose, but solely from the thoughtless drifting to and fro with idle winds and currents.

The first preventive for this soul-drifting is the cherishing of a high and noble *aim* in life. The mind should be fixed on an object well worth living for, and it should gaze on that object so intently as not to see all the side issues which distract the attention and betray one into a zigzag course. It is when we are "going nowhere" that we are most easily led anywhere. It is when we are "doing nothing" that we are most apt to "do anything." It is when we are not interested in any particular purpose that chance whims or caprices seize us most readily, and lead us astray. Therefore is it well very early in life to see what we are fitted for by the constitution of our own nature, and learn just the work we were created to do. For he who framed these human souls, and launched them on the sea of life, and sent them out over the wide waters to do his bidding, has intrusted to each one a package of sealed orders, to be opened by and by, when he has reached the latitude of discretion,—to be studied with care and obeyed with fidelity. There, he will read the course he was designed to follow, and see whether he is to keep safely along with the great fleet, or to start off alone on a dangerous cruise. Happy is he who can clearly make out—so near the beginning of life's voyage, and before one fruitless experiment after another has been tried only to fail—which port the Creator intended him to make and in which direction he must sail to reach it. Yes: happy is he who can estimate his own powers so correctly as to enter at once on the work where he can serve humanity best and achieve the highest success. No idle wavering for him, no helpless drifting about among the rocks and

shoals, no tossing to and fro, and being driven by every wind!

Yet this clear reading of the divine will and human duty is not always permitted. Not unfrequently, in spite of most painful efforts to do right in the first place, one must try trade after trade, profession after profession, before either he or you can feel that he has found his place. But even then, in what most concerns his success, his prophetic eye can see the outlines of the *character* he is expected to make his own. The instincts of youth are very trustworthy in this most important point of all; and many elements of a worthy character, which are hidden from the wise and prudent who have become entangled with worldly affairs, are revealed unto babes whose clear vision is not yet dimmed by dust of earth. So though the road to business success is sometimes shrouded in obscurity, that to spiritual worthiness is almost invariably plain. One sees, from the very outset of life, the purity which shames the world's impurity, the virtue which shames the world's vice, the self-consecration which rebukes all self-indulgence, and, beyond all this, some glimpses of the heaven to which everything earthly should tend. To young men and maidens is granted this vision of excellence, and it rises up before them as something at which they must steadily and consciously aim. For, looking up, they will be lifted up; and while the eyes are fixed on something well worth attaining, though it be still afar off, the soul will move in that direction, and not be drawn hither and thither. A high and worthy aim will serve to prevent its drifting.

But, in addition to this, a second preventive is needed

to keep us safe from the winds and currents that would lead us astray. Not only is a worthy aim required, but a vigorous, energetic travelling toward that aim. Rapid sailing is the preventive of drifting. The sluggish stream winds here and there, in every direction, and comes to an end in a swamp; while the mountain torrent, rushing swiftly on, cuts a straight furrow for itself through the land, and pours its waters into the sea from which they came. You will get to no place worth reaching, unless you travel zealously. Little obstacles will stop your progress, and every varying gust of wind will blow you off your course. ~~Your boy begins to tell a story in a slow, careless way, and makes so poor work of it, before getting through, that you can scarcely tell what he has been talking about; but when you bid him, "Begin all over again, and speak up smartly," he repeats the tale in a few quick words which picture the whole scene vividly before your eyes. We must talk forcibly, if we would talk straight; and one of the worst stammerers I ever heard in private conversation never showed the slightest impediment of speech after getting fairly under way in earnest reading or vigorous declamation.~~ It is momentum that is needed to overcome the friction of life, push away every obstacle from the path, and carry us beyond those "dead points" in our course, where else we should have come to a standstill. Even your boy knows that philosophy, when he draws back a few paces and runs, that he may jump a stream he could not otherwise have cleared; and your horse knows it too, as well as his master, when he hastens up a hill with a load he could not have dragged on a walk. You cannot guide a ship

into any port whatever in a dead calm: she never minds her helm, unless she is moving vigorously through the waters. And we, also, must be zealously affected in the good thing we have resolved upon, if we hope to carry it forward to full success. Energetic motion is our safeguard against soul-drifting; and that mother has no right to complain that her boy "goes so like a steam-engine that nothing can stop him," for that is far better than "going so like a snail that anything can stop him."

In the *Garden of the Soul*, a common Roman Catholic book of devotion, the list of capital or deadly sins ends with "Sloth," which is defined as "a certain laziness of mind." But, though the reverend fathers placed it *last* in their list of mortal offences, they showed that they regarded it as by no means *least* in its deplorable results; for they have laid down more rules concerning it than concerning almost any other sin. Especially do they, in connection with this subject, urge upon all "to meditate upon such subjects as may help to move us to the love of God and to fervor in his service,—such as the considerations of the divine perfections, of the love of God to us and of his benefits, of the passion of our Redeemer and of the glory of his heavenly kingdom." For they were men who devoted themselves almost wholly to the culture of human souls; and no little weight should be given to their testimony that "a certain laziness of mind" is very sure to be followed by wandering thoughts, wayward passions, and uncontrolled desires. Beginning as merely negative goodness, it speedily develops into positive wrong.

Therefore, what is needed to save us from this hopeless drifting to and fro, which is so sure to be attended with shipwreck and loss, is *enthusiasm* in what is good and right. The enthusiasm of *learning*;—that is what must save your children from the vanities and follies, the trials and frettings, the temptations and vices of school life. Well may you hesitate to send them away from home, when you look over the field of study. There are so many things to fritter away time and talents, so many that are purchased at the expense of virtue as well as money, so many that bring but an ignoble pleasure at the time and bitter regret afterward,—you cannot help pausing to count the risks, and calculate whether the probable good will pay. But, if your son has the genuine enthusiasm of learning, he will “not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.” If your daughter is truly bent on study, she will glide safely because swiftly over the pitfalls, where sluggish feet will pause, break through, and be snared.

So, too, enthusiasm in *business* has saved many a man from drifting away into corrupting vices. It has kept him from the idle companionship, the scenes of debauchery, the temptations of sensuality, which have drawn so many others to and fro, and driven them at last to ruin; and, if ever you are tempted to utter a warning against excessive devotion to business (and truly the warning must be uttered at times), it will be well to remember that, in nine-tenths of all the cases, the laborers, clerks, and merchants who throw away their manhood and drift into shame are those who are slothful in business, and never do with all their might

the work which is assigned them. The diligent pursuit of their calling would have saved them from their mournful fate; and many a young man who is now drifting into shame would be rescued from danger, if he entered on his week's work with a genuine enthusiasm for business.

Still more needful, then, is it to be filled with the enthusiasm for *virtue*, and be zealously affected in the highest and best concerns of life. The whole nature must tend that way so eagerly and intently that it will not deviate from its course to the right hand or the left. How shall he drift into vice, who is all the time laboring for holiness? How shall he slip into the old abandoned ways, who is actively laboring to reform humanity? The strength of his zeal will keep his course straight. Not every wind will drive him about, but only the breath of God's Holy Spirit. Not every wave will toss him to and fro, but only the tides of the Divine Will.

Without that enthusiasm for virtue, man is nothing but an unballasted ship, with swinging rudder and flapping sails, lying in its harbor, trembling and creaking and rocking with every breath of wind. Each puny ripple on the water tosses it about and dashes it against the pier. All the elements make sport of it, and laugh to scorn the wooden hull which boasted it could ride the waves. Then, if moved to anger by these taunts, it breaks from its moorings, it floats at the mercy of every current, dashes against the breakers or sand-bars, or founders in the sea. But let that man take in a due sense of solemn obligations, and sail with all possible speed to the port which nature and God designed him

to reach, and nothing will swerve him aside. Come from what point they will, the winds will bear him to the chosen harbor. The tossing ripples he will cease to feel, the rolling waves he will ride in triumph, and he who was the plaything of the river becomes the "sovereign of the seas." Setting every inch of canvas to the breeze, he will be no more tossed to and fro or driven from his course, but will leave far behind him the rock and shoals where drifting souls are wrecked and lost. On he will go to manly independence, a fair name, and a worthy character; swiftly on to honor, usefulness, and virtue; steadily on to Christ and God and heaven.

SEPT. 23, 1877.

XV.

GROWING WHILE SLEEPING.

“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” — MARK IV., 26. 27

AMONG all the discourses upon the parables of Jesus, it has never been my fortune to hear one upon this. Yet surely it ought not to be passed over by any teacher who would show how the kingdom of God is to be established among men. For it reminds us of what we sometimes forget,—that waking and working are not the only requisites for securing the best results, but waiting and sleeping are needful too. Man is not the sole agent in the raising of a harvest, and his exertion is not the sole factor to be considered. When he has prepared the soil as well as he can, and planted the best seed he is able to procure, he must leave it to the good providence of God. Do not be anxious about the result, or weary yourself or others with frettings and worryings. Do not keep awake through the long night-watches to wonder what will happen. Lie down each night for long refreshing slumber: the seed “will grow while thou art sleeping.” Rise up each morning to engage in the other duties that are appointed you: the seed will grow while you are laboring elsewhere. “Duties belong to man, events to God,” says the old

English proverb ; and, when we have rightly done our part first, we need borrow no trouble respecting his. The rain and dew, the heat and light, and everything that is needful for promoting growth, are under his control, and will all come in due time, if indeed the harvest is one that is required for the welfare of the world. You shall rouse up some morning from a sound sleep, or return some evening from distant fields of labor, and shall find that the seed you once planted has sprung up and grown, you know not how. For work is but one element of growth : sleep is another, just as needful and essential too.

To go no farther at first than the mere outside of things, see how true all this is of the flesh and blood, bone and sinew, which make up our bodily frames. One of the wisest prescriptions you ever gave your little child who wanted to be large and strong was, "Go to bed, then, and sleep, if you want to grow." The child may sometimes think you say it for no other purpose than to get rid of him, as, indeed, you often do ; but, more commonly, he believes you more thoroughly than you believe yourself, and goes off contentedly to his bed. Yet, in reality, it is no child's play that is thus carried on. The prescription is true, though often spoken in jest. It embodies the accumulated wisdom of all the fathers and mothers who have been since the world began ; and every new discovery made as to the laws of human life and health has left unimpaired this old law, which was in the beginning and will be at the end. In the rapid growth of knowledge, we have pronounced many nursery sayings to be as destitute of literal truth as the nursery tales, and

many pieces of advice given children to be parts of a "science which is *falsely* so called"; but never have I heard of philosopher, scientist, or physician, who, after the most thorough investigation of the subject, doubted the parental wisdom which says, "Go to sleep, if you want to grow." Whatever idle traditions may still linger in the nursery, this is one of the everlasting truths. And I do not think it a waste of time to pause here a moment and advise you, who think yourselves grown-up men and women, to drink a full draught from the cup which you press to the children's lips. The business anxieties and household cares that vex you are not to be cured by sitting up late and wearing the long hours away with frettings and worryings, as the evening darkens into night. The wisdom that sees through a tangled mass of affairs does not come when you are pacing the room more anxiously than they who watch for the morning. The strength which rights the wrong at last, despairs of entering a body which tosses all night on a sleepless bed. Such wisdom and strength have chosen, as their favorite time for growing, the hours when you are resting in peaceful slumbers. So that, when you awaken in the morning, the right way has grown wonderfully clear to your sight and easy to your feet. The brain solves the hardest of all problems when left alone to itself by night, while the will is quietly sleeping; and, on the morrow, it acts with its new wisdom and strength. It is not literally a "panacea" to cure *all* the ills of life, and yet the reach of its influence is far wider than is commonly supposed. If matters begin to go wrong in your household this evening, the sooner you get to bed and to sleep, the better.

If business begins to trouble you to-morrow, a long night's sleep will do tenfold more good than any amount of waking, anxiety, and care. Every teacher here present is doubtless aware that the more sleep she gets to-night, the more patience, strength, and self-control she will take into the school to-morrow; and, as for ministers, one of their own number has left this on record, that the more sleep a minister gets in his bed Saturday night, the less sleep his people will get in their pews Sunday morning. If only you do your part of the work faithfully, and leave the result with filial trust to that good providence of God which keeps all the laws of your being in operation, you may rest quietly in the assurance that, while you sleep by night and rise by day, the seed will spring up and grow, though you know not how.

And all this is true of our highest spiritual concerns. There is a way of prying into our own and others' hearts to see if the kingdom of God is established there, which resembles nothing else so much as a child's perpetual digging into the ground to see if his seeds have sprouted. Neither natural nor spiritual harvests are raised in that way. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." All your anxieties and frettings do but block up the ways of the spirit and delay the advent of the wished-for good. And yet there are those who act as if the whole responsibility for the welfare of earth and heaven rested upon their shoulders, and nothing divine would grow without their aid. As if goodness were not growing on the earth when they began their care-taking! As if it would not keep growing after they had passed away!

There need be no fear that the duty of doing our part of the work thoroughly, before we sit down to wait or lie down to sleep, will be forgotten in theory at least, however it may be in practice. Certainly, in our portion of the Christian Church, we need very little reminding that man must prepare the soil and sow the seed before going far away and leaving the harvest to the good providence of God. If we have learned nothing else from our sermons and teachers, and from the Book of books, which we value so highly because it is so "profitable for instruction in righteousness," we have learned the necessity of making all things ready for the coming of the Lord, if we would have him abide in our hearts and homes. We have learned that we must keep all the avenues of the soul wide open, if we would have the Holy Spirit, which surrounds us like an all-embracing ocean, flow into the deep recesses of our being, and fill us from out of the very fulness of God. We have learned that we must help ourselves, if we would be helped by anything higher than ourselves; must get ready for the journey and stand in the way of righteousness, if we would have divine guidance; must raise our anchors and spread every sail, if we would catch the favoring winds of heaven and be wafted to the harbor of the celestial city. Time and again we have been told, so often there seems no possibility of our forgetting it, that only when we have gone as fast and far as we can have we a right to stand still with any assurance that we shall see salvation come from God. And all that should be repeated and remembered as an essential part of that Christianity which is the "same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Yet never

should we forget that, while this is a part of Christianity, it is only a part, and that the hard work of the waking hours is to be followed by quiet trust and sleep. For, sometimes, it is to be feared that, while we give due heed to the first part of Dr. Chalmers' creed, that "man must work as if God does nothing," we do not go on to the last part,— "Man must trust as if God does everything."

The seed grows when, after your most faithful labors, you leave it hidden away from mortal sight, and go to your homes for quiet sleep. That is the great Teacher's lesson, and it is repeated by all the experiences of life. The highest good seldom, if ever, comes while you are seeking it. It *follows* work, but does not *accompany* it. It will not come at all, if you do not toil first; and yet, like a wayward infant, it will not come *while* you are toiling. Why, you shall seek some heavenly blessing day after day, week in and week out, with unremitting labor, till your nerves are all unstrung, and the brain aches from weariness, and the face is thin and pale, and the hollow eyes tell of wakeful nights, and it shall seem still as far off from you as ever; and, then, you shall give it all up for a while, and lie down to long and trusting sleep, and the blessing will steal softly into your heart and nestle there with calm content, as if at last it had found the one home for which it was made; and, when you awaken in the morning, you find it is indeed your very own. The best work is always too great for you to finish during your conscious strivings: you must let go of it, when your part of the toil is done, and trust it to "the Power which makes for righteousness." You can bend your bow and draw the arrow to

the head with all the strength that is in you, and take the surest aim ; but quick, let go, drop your hand, if you want to hit the far-off mark ! Ask the youngest school-boy how far he can shoot, if he keeps hold of the string all the time and tries to push the arrow from the bow by his puny strength. Yet that is what we are continually doing, when, after our part of the work is over, we still keep hold of it, and lie awake all night without daring to drop asleep, lest the Almighty should not be able to do his part of the task alone. *Let go*, when your part is finished, if you want to reach any mark that is worth hitting.

I have called it the common experience of life that the best results are not found while we are seeking them, but appear to come of their own accord when we have given up the search. Of course, I can speak with most assurance of ministerial experiences as to that clear insight into a truth, and that firm grasp of a truth, out of which a sermon grows. For often have I wished to present some new subject, and yet been forced to lay it aside, after long and earnest thought, as not yet real and vivid enough for my use. Time after time, it has been taken up, and as often laid aside, till weeks lengthened into months and months to a year, and yet its real meaning was not revealed. But when at last it was left alone, to care for itself, or be cared for like the planted seed, suddenly, at some leisure period, it was born "full statured in an hour," and was written down without an effort, as fast as the hand could move the pen ; and, when it was preached, the speaking eyes of the people said, "Amen." Such visions of the truth never come without eager search, and yet they do not

come *during* it. They follow, but do not accompany one's toil.

Or, if you turn from sermons to poetry, you will find all the poets agreeing with Mrs. Howe in saying, "I never *made* a poem, dear friend: I never sat me down and said,

This cunning brain and patient hand
Shall fashion something to be read."

For it is not merely the poet, but the poem that is "born, not made."

Or, if you turn to discoverers and inventors, who have lightened our labors and brightened our lives, the same truth is seen with undiminished clearness. No human beings have labored longer or harder, with fewer immediate results; but it is not till they stop laboring and let the mind rest for a while that the heavenly vision is granted them. Archimedes cannot solve King Hiero's problem in his study; but, as soon as he tosses it aside and jumps into his bath, the solution flashes on his mind with lightning rapidity, and he cries out, "Eureka! I've found it." So, if the old legends are to be received, it is to the dreamy Newton, idling his time away among the trees, that a falling apple tells the secret of gravity; and it is to the listless Galileo, staring lazily around him in the church, that a swinging chandelier reveals a mode of measuring time. But none of these stories set a premium on idleness, or promise any reward to him who has not first finished the work that was given him. Millions of people have seen falling apples without catching a glimpse of the law which holds the universe together, and binds it fast to God. Millions have leaped into the water without finding there an answer

to the royal problems of philosophy. The sudden revelation does not come in the leisure moments, unless hard and patient toil has gone before, any more than sleep will bring a harvest when no seed has been cast into the ground; and yet it very seldom comes till one has ceased from toil, and into his quiet, resting soul God sends the wished-for vision. There is no such thing, I repeat, as sending an arrow to the mark *while you keep hold of the string!*

And so there is a great reality in what we say about the wonderfully clear and glorious lessons of sickness; only it probably is not the disease, weakness, or pain that does us the highest good, but the *enforced idleness and rest* which we will not take until we are obliged to let go our work. The same high thoughts and holy purposes would spring up within us at other times, if we would only take a voluntary rest from household anxieties and business cares. They would grow in healthy bodies as readily as in the sick, if we only gave them quiet hours for germinating. And it is chiefly because in times of health we are apt to keep mind and body on the strain, and rob the one of quiet meditation and the other of peaceful sleep, that we fail to catch glimpses of heavenly realities or to hear the whispers of a divine voice. Ah, my hearers, count that sickness a friend which shuts you up in the house, and will not let you dig up your seeds every day; for these so often have no chance to grow, save when you are sick and sleeping. Count that sickness a friend which prevents your taking up a new problem of life, and obliges you to lie quiet while the old problem solves itself before your eyes. Yes, count it a friend when it forces you to

accept what you would not take of your own accord, the leisure moments for seeing that truth is so plentiful that he who asks shall receive it, and heaven is so near that he who stretches out his hand and knocks shall have its gates opened before him. For, indeed, there are many who have learned in sickness what they would not stop to gain in health; and so, when they have come up out of great tribulation, they stand with richer minds and whiter souls before the throne of God.

But why wait for sickness to bring the blessing which can be gained in health and strength, if we will only offer a calm and tranquil mind for its reception? Surely, it is not demanding too much to ask that, when our part of any work has been performed, we should leave the result with patient trust to the providence of God. It is but leaving it to the power which has changed this earth from the former chaos which geologists describe to the present beauty which our artists love to paint. It is but leaving it to the wisdom which caused the first rude form of life, which could scarcely be told from death, to usher in an almost endless series of nobler, higher forms, until man at last appears as a living soul. It is but leaving it to the love which found humanity, at the outset, low, ignorant, and brutish, and has lifted it up to civilization and glory. It is leaving it to the Being in whom devout souls have had so much faith that in every age they could exclaim, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." It is leaving it to that Fountain of all Good which filled us with our divine discontent at everything low and worthless in our lives, and showed us a pattern of better things in

the heavens. It is but leaving to an ever-watchful Father, who loves you with an undying love, and who, guiding the universe by his perfect intelligence, can surely bring the best results from the well-performed labors of man. For so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast the best seed into the ground, and leave it while he went his way to sleep by night and rise by day,—and the seed should spring up and grow, he knows not how.

JAN. 28, 1880.

XVI.

PERSONAL EQUATION.*

THE subject which I wish to bring before the Alumni of the Divinity School is Personal Equation. Stated more fully, it is the necessity of allowing for personal equation in all our observations of heavenly things, just as the astronomer allows for it in all his observations of heavenly bodies, that he may secure the utmost exactness in his results. For the astronomer aims at rigid exactness, and notes a little fraction of a second, which is too small to be taken into account in the sweep of a human life, but is highly important when one measures the flashing of a meteor through the sky or the speed at which light travels through space. Yet it is safe to say that practically no astronomer is absolutely exact. It would not be unusual for a half-dozen observers, watching together the same celestial phenomenon, to record its coming and going at half a dozen different times,—a difference so slight that you must measure it in thousandths of seconds, it may be, and yet altogether too great when you reflect on the rapidity with which these bodies sweep through the sky. One has that nervous organization which mis-

* An Essay before the Alumni of the Harvard Divinity School, June 28, 1881.
(Read by Rev. S. J. Barrows.)

takes the "almost" for the "quite," calls everything done when it is not completely finished, and, in his eagerness to be on time, marks transit and eclipse as having begun and ended before either beginning or ending actually takes place. And another has that sluggish temperament which does not realize "on the dot" that the phenomenon is over, and then loses time in summoning up will and fingers to record the fact. So one of these records is almost uniformly just so far behind the other; and the astronomer must make allowance for these personal peculiarities in deciding exactly when the event occurred,—a little later than is reported by the one, a little earlier than is claimed by the other. In so doing, he makes a personal equation between them.

Yet it is not enough to know the relative distance between these two sets of observations. Science goes still further, and applies the most rigid tests to learn the exact time-error made by each observer, and whether he is habitually fast or habitually slow, and just how much he deviates from what is perfectly correct. It learns then not the relative, but the absolute personal equation of each man, and knows what allowance to make in all his reports of heavenly phenomena. So, from an inaccurate report, you gain a sufficiently accurate idea of what has taken place, just as a chronometer, which gains or loses regularly at a known rate, leaves you in no doubt about the time.

Now, what the astronomer does to secure exactness in the record of celestial phenomena can be done by us with equally good results in the common events of life. We must make the same personal equation when peo-

ple are telling us, or we are telling them, of things which are sure to happen. For here is one man of so sanguine a temperament that, in imagination, he already sees his hopes gratified and his efforts crowned with success. His candidate is sure to be elected to office, his church is certain to take the lead in thought and action ; and he describes it to the world under the name of "the church of the future," as being the only one which is to survive the revolution of time. His far-off holidays will positively be bright and sunny, when they make their appearance, whatever the weather may be now ; and his plans for the coming year are spoken of as no less actual than the events of yesterday. He always makes money on paper beforehand out of his proposed ventures in business, and can prove to his own satisfaction, if not to yours, just how large the profits will be and where they will come from. But you who have studied these peculiarities, and learned how often he has figured out these profits, seen these visions, and dreamed these dreams, make allowance for his personal equation, and are not very easily misled.

Then, on the other hand, you will come across desponding temperaments, which are perfectly certain that failure awaits them, that their hopes will prove idle, their efforts come to nought, and none of their ventures will succeed. They look for no sunshine in the heavens or on the earth on the days when their fortunes are especially at stake ; and, if their word is to be taken, each little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, is sure to cover the sky at last, and pour down drenching showers to sweep their wealth away. And yet, when you have computed their personal equation,

you do not take their word on any theme like this, although you may class them among the most honest and conscientious of Christian souls, since you have learned that no coming day is as dark as their gloomy fears, and the reality is always better than their anticipations. Some bright colors are always to be added to any picture they draw, before it will be a truthful representation of human life.

Now, it seems a very simple thing to say that a man should learn to do for his estimates of what is to come just what every clear-minded observer does for him; yet, simple as it is, this is the very part of the "know thyself" which we have not commonly put in practice, however often it has been urged upon us. If an astronomer can convince himself that his records of an eclipse are uniformly fast or slow, and that they deviate, on an average, just so many thousandths of a second from absolute exactness, so that he himself can make the allowance for his time-error as soon as his observations are finished, there seems no reason why every human being should not understand what allowance to make for errors in judgment in the commonest pursuits of life. He should know, if he knows himself, just how much and on which side he errs from strict accuracy in his various moods, and allow for it in the final summing up of his opinion, before he puts it into practice.

Here, for example, is a man in a heat of passion about to make reprisals for the injuries he has received. Yet he ought to know that his judgment in such a passion always exaggerates the harm which has been done him, that the act was *not* the vilest ever committed,

that his enemy is not the worst man that ever was, and that it is not true that he will never forgive him as long as he lives, whether in this world or the world which is to come. He should bear in mind that anger is an unjust judge, and that vast deductions must be made from his estimate of his enemy's guilt and from his plans of proposed vengeance before he ventures to carry out his wrathful schemes and put his feelings into action. So another, wild with speculation, should tone down the roseate hues of his picture of business prosperity, and should discount so largely from his paper estimate of profits that he shall not risk any trust funds in his schemes, or the fortunes of his wife and children, even if he does risk his own. And still again there are the desponding moods, before alluded to, when the judgment is so far astray that the simplest truths of life are magnified and distorted out of just proportion, and all things seem out of joint, and humanity looks far worse than it really is, and one's own self seems the worst of all. But one who has made this personal equation knows how utterly unworthy of trust all his decisions are, when made in that frame of mind, and therefore refuses to decide anything in such a mood. To some unhappy natures, it must needs be that fits of despondency will come; but woe unto the man who at such a time decides anything of moment to himself or the world! For, while it is no sin to be depressed in spirits, it is sinful to judge ourselves or others in that abnormal state, and act upon the judgment. It would be hard to tell how much our prosperity in daily affairs depends on making this allowance for personal equation; for, when the sanguine man tones

down his expectations, and the desponding heart puts a cheerful courage on, and the angry spirit refuses to act till calmer reflection comes, the certain failure which seemed to await them all gives place to a great success. To make this allowance for your changing moods is oftentimes the whole difference between victory and defeat.

But, if a man ought to make these allowances for himself in order to determine the right course of action, we also should make them for him, if we would learn the value of his testimony in any given case. For one's word is not to be taken exactly for what it means and says, merely because he has a well-trained mind, honest heart, and conscientious spirit. No amount of Christianity makes him a trustworthy witness in any case where his deepest affections are involved, however essential that Christianity may be to his trustworthiness; for the affections sway the judgment so much that even the best physicians of the land scarcely dare prescribe for their own sick children. There is something besides the known honesty of a man's purpose that is to be taken into account in deciding on the worth of his evidence; and that is the strong tide of feeling which bears him this way or that, without yielding any perfect obedience to his judgment. "The wish is" so often "father to the thought" that it must be placed in the opposite scale; and, although if the testimony is reversed, and the former admit that his friend erred somewhat, you are all the surer that he fell into error, and, if the other admits that his enemy for that occasion did right, you are all the surer in your mind that such was the case. Certainly, a cause must be

very doubtful, if one who usually paints all things in rosy hues begins to doubt it; and just as certainly it must have some encouraging features, if a desponding soul, which usually talks of Church and State in a gloomy tone, sees any sign of good cheer. For thus it is that moods, wishes, prejudices, and everything from which you make up a man's personal equation, must be taken into account, if you would correct his "judgment errors" and arrive at the absolute truth.

It makes one much more charitable toward the conflicting opinions of the world to see that they do not necessarily spring from any unfaithfulness to the best parts of our being, any infidelity of mind, heart, or life, but are natural, if not necessary, outgrowths of these diversities of human nature. How one can like certain people, approve certain actions, vote for certain candidates, or join certain churches, is a matter far beyond our comprehension, and so strange that we cannot help wondering whether *we* are the weak-minded ones or *they*, for surely no two minds equally strong and honest would vary so much in their conclusions,—all of which would be a very correct decision, if the judgment were formed by thoughts alone, but is very incorrect, now that moods, temperaments, feelings, and all such personal peculiarities enter into the problems of life as so many important factors. "One billion human beings, and no two exactly alike,"—is not that what we thank God for? And, just because of that unlikeness, our conclusions must vary somewhat in all except the most purely intellectual concerns. I am not sure when I see two different asters that they came from different varieties of seeds. Perhaps the difference lay in the soil

alone. And so we learn to feel kindly and speak charitably of those who, in view of the same spiritual facts, divide off into conservative and radical, untiring seekers of the new and devoted lovers of the old, ritualists who never have devised so many forms that they cannot add a new one with the coming year, and anti-ritualists who are fast obliterating all worship from the Sunday services and turning the church into a lecture-room.

So it is neither strength of mind nor honesty of thinking which alone has to do with one's denominational creed; and there are "born orthodox," as we say, in certain Unitarian families, and "born Unitarians" in the same way in many Trinitarian families. The differences begin to show themselves almost as soon as the first questions of the catechism are considered, and no amount of argument which satisfies all the rest of the family is sufficient to bring these odd ones into line. So there are whole families in which you could not imagine any radical change of theologic faith, unless they are made all over again in the most thorough way. For my part, I always accepted, without question, the truthfulness of the saying attributed to Charles I., of England, that "the students were by nature Roman Catholic, and could not honestly be otherwise, whatever they might pretend for political purposes." There was all the more reason, therefore, why he should have understood that the middle classes of Great Britain were born Puritans, and would remain so at heart, in spite of standing armies and star-chambers, prisons, and gibbets. For it is not thought alone which frames the creed, but something which perme-

ates and sways the thought; and so one shall write a tract to prove by Biblical quotations that Unitarianism, Methodism, or something else was the faith of Christ and the apostles, and shall hope to move the world, if it will only read or listen; but to-day, when he is minister or priest of some very different church, you shall read to him the very same tract, without the change of a single word, and he is not moved himself at all. Because, I repeat, this creed is not the result of what he thinks merely, but also of what he *is*.

I have tried to lead your minds by the path which mine has travelled from the observation of heavenly phenomena to the observation of what we call heavenly truths. We found in the outset that, with the same moon and planets before them, astronomers had "time-errors" in their records of eclipses; and now we find that, in the midst of the same spiritual facts, our theologians differ so much that there must be many errors of judgment in the record of what their souls heard and saw. But as in the former case we found that the mistake did not come from intentional wrong, but solely from that personal equation which a man must make and allow for all through life, so it is when we touch the realities of ethics and religion. For the whole man decides questions of duty, and decides them oftentimes very differently from the intellect alone. He who is seated quietly in his room interprets passages of the Bible, or, meditating upon the inimitable laws of right which gave birth to the Bible, solves the vexed problems about the conduct of life to his own satisfaction, and thinks he has settled them once and forever as far as he himself is concerned; but when he

gets into the world, and has his desires or feelings aroused to full activity, he reverses his decision, and thinks, in all honesty, unselfishness, and devoutness, that Christian duty lies on the opposite side. A score or two of years ago, we had thinkers and speakers among the men we most honored, who denounced all wars, whether offensive or defensive, as a violation of the precepts of Christ and the rules of political economy. They denied that appeals to arms could ever be justified by one who had regard for either the authority of religion or the true prosperity of the State; and war, and even war for independence, was branded as a sin whose guilt exceeded murder, as much as a million slain in battle outnumber one poor victim who is stabbed in the dark. Yet, when the time came for testing these ideas, and showing whether they were mere theories of the study or working rules for administering affairs of State, how often a reconsideration of the question was moved in the tribunal of conscience, and a new decision reached! Non-resistants enlisted in the armies of the Union, which heretofore they had denounced, and drew in fresh recruits from every side; and, had you reminded them of some of their own warm sayings, such as, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword," they would have looked at you with some amazement, and perhaps a little sneer in their tones, as though that had anything to do with the matter, as though they were not ready to perish by the sword, if only the country could be saved!

Now, it seems to me that, in the case of any thoroughly good men, the decision which comes out of the life, with a warm heart full of affections and desires, is

far more apt to be correct than what proceeds from cold thought without any warmth of feeling. But that is not the question before us now. Whether more correct or not, it is almost sure to be *different*, because these new forces are at work and sway the judgment. It is just the difference that is to be noted between the Master Washington who "couldn't tell a lie, father," and the General Washington who could and did tell them a few years later, and did it so successfully that he completely deceived General Henry Clinton, and put an end to the Revolutionary War. For you see that, in this as in the other cases alluded to, there was no loss of Christian principle and conscientiousness; and the general was as near the kingdom of heaven as the boy; but, with the changing character, desires, and feelings, there came a change in the convictions of truth and duty.

Hence the oft-quoted saying, "As a man thinketh, so is he," finds through the personal equation its correlative statement, "As a man is, so he thinketh." It would be hard to estimate the multitude of discourses for which the first of these sayings has furnished a text. Were one to look through the fabled barrel of sermons, which no minister hath seen but all his people believe in, he would constantly come across those which set forth the effect of belief upon character, and perhaps would be somewhat surprised to note the broad surface they cover. To say, "I believe, and therefore have I *spoken*," is a very small part of any one's confession of faith. "I believe, and therefore have I *acted* and *become*," is needed to complete it. I believe in God, and therefore would make the whole life reveren-

tial and devout, as in the presence of one who, though unseen, is eternal. I believe in a divine spirit dwelling in the human breast, and therefore can labor untiringly for the worst, since there can be no "incorrigibles" or incurables in the whole universe of God. I believe in immortality, and therefore every act has a new significance, because it is not merely a thing of to-day that shall pass into nothingness by to-morrow. Belief is the fountain whence the stream of action runs. Belief is the root whence the tree of life grows. Belief is the mainspring of the hardest and most persistent endeavors. Is it not said, "All things are possible to him that believeth"? And is it not also said, in the very same spirit, that a vast host of fugitives wandered through a desert till they reached the promised land for which they had long been looking, but, when they already stood at its gateways, "they could not enter into it because of unbelief"? It is no wonder, in view of facts like these, that so many sermons should have been written to show the influence of belief in moulding the character and shaping the life.

Yet, when we begin to inquire why the beliefs differ so greatly and lead to such diverse results, we begin to realize that they, in their turn, are the outgrowths of character, and that what a man *is* determines, to no small degree, the amount and kind of truth he will see and lay hold of. In the simplest occupations of life, we are continually reminded of this by seeing how much the inner life has to do with all the reports that the senses give concerning the outward world. For how often you discover that what a man sees, as he goes through the world, depends more on what he is

than on what kind of eyes he happens to have. Those eyes may be so perfect that an oculist shall find no fault in them, but shall pronounce them marvels of excellence ; and yet they may miss the greatest glories that are spread over heaven and earth, may miss the sunset clouds on the western hills, where the Lord God is seen in the burning bush and the bush is not consumed, may miss meteors and comets, flowers and stars, auroras and rainbows, miss the beauty of lakes, the majesty of mountains, the grandeur of the ocean, and the sublimity of the storm. All this and more he may fail to see as the years go on and bear him through life's journey ; and his report of what he sees, as stage after stage of that journey is finished, is as brief and unsatisfactory as Paul's account of the one single instant on which he opened his eyes in Paradise. For it is the man that sees, not the eyes, however keen and bright they are ; and what he sees in his daily walks and what he misses depends far more on the nature of his inner life than on the peculiarities of his organs of vision. My Adirondack guide, when I asked him to show me a deer's track whenever we came to where they were, said they had been around me all the while. There was where a deer lay down quite recently, and there was a tree whose lower branches had been cropped by one, and there were the footprints in the grass and flowers, and there the lily-pads had been nibbled as one of the creatures came down to the lake-side to drink. Even when he told me, I could scarcely see the tracks which to him were so clear that he could keep on running while reading them, and to his judgment the wayfaring man would be a fool who erred

there. But, when I stooped and picked a flower, as large as a violet and plentiful as daisies in a neglected field, and asked him the name, he could only say: "I don't know. Where did you get it? I never saw that before." And yet he had seen thousands that very day and every July day he entered those woods. He saw the deer-tracks which crushed those flowers, but not the flowers which the deer had crushed! For no one sees the whole, and which of all earthly things he sees or fails to see depends not so much on his eyesight as on his character. If you have computed his personal equation, you can tell with great accuracy, beforehand, what he will note and what miss as he goes along the way.

Now, the principle which we have applied to the sight is certainly no less applicable to the *insight*; and what one is, in his real character, must determine what he sees, lays hold of, and firmly believes with his mind. As already hinted at and partially illustrated, one's practical creed, his working rules, his daily chart for steering his course aright, are not laid down by his cool, unimpassioned thought, but by the co-operation of thought and feeling, love and hate, like and dislike, and everything which enters into the practical judgment of life. In this way, he decides not merely on what is right, but also on what is true. Thus, he believes most firmly, he says, in an overruling deity; but the nature of the deity to whom he pays homage is simply his own human nature perfected. For he always makes God after his own image,—in the image of man creates he God. All that is highest, holiest, divinest in himself he conceives of as stretching out to infinite

perfection; while all that is low, earthly, or transitory is sloughed off and thrown aside, and the result is his ideal of the Holy One, to whom he gives the name of God. So our conception of the divine will always varies with our ever-changing characters; and the man's God will differ from the child's, just as much as his ideal of perfection has changed in his growth from youth to maturity. God as depicted by the civilized world will invariably differ from the God represented by savages; and a hundred years hence, when America has changed either way, for better or worse, she will have changed her conception of the divine. For what God is will always be what we are, carried on to perfection. And, as soon as you know the national character of a people, its real ideal of excellence, you will know, without any telling, what it thinks of God.

Or, to look at something which more directly concerns our hopes and longings, examine the belief in immortality, which under some of its varying forms is so general as to be commonly called universal. But, even if it is absolutely universal, it is continually changed by the changing natures of those who hold it, and who make it correspond to their own hopes and fears. Doubtless, we have smiled at the story which we scarcely believed of the missionary who painted for the half-frozen Greenlanders the brightness and warmth of the everlasting fires so vividly and so convincingly that they all shouted with joy, and asked to be shown the way; for it was the eternal heaven they had always wanted. Truthful, if not true, the story. For always one's picture of heaven is his picture of the greatest bliss; and what that will be depends on what *he* is,

with his character, desires, and feelings; and so you will find different men holding two theories of heaven, utterly unlike each other, and yet equally sincere, merely because the inner lives of the men are dwelling on such different planes. Hence, you will find Christians whose heaven is as sensuous as a Mohammedan Paradise, because they themselves are as sensuous as the Mohammedans; and another is so tired, sickly, and wayworn that he looks forward to a rest prepared for all the children of God; and, to a third, heaven is a source of joy, because it offers scope for boundless activity and progress. And which of these is your ideal of perfect bliss, or mine, does not depend on the interpretation of the New Testament or the careful following out of any speculation, or on the strength and vigor of our thoughts, but rather on the nature of our inner life.

Here, namely, is your ideal East Indian whose notion of happiness is to do nothing but sit on a comfortable lounge and enjoy the good things offered him. What should he do? Read? There are plenty to read to him or tell him stories. Dance? There are girls enough to do it for him for a silver piece. Sing, play an instrument, act in private theatricals? As though there were not enough to do that for his amusement, while he sat there watching and listening. And, when a religious zeal comes to his soul, he longs for nothing more than the contemplative life with its quiet meditation on holy things. So when that man dreams of any future state of existence beyond the present, his heaven is Nirvana, which, whatever else it means or does not mean, means the utter absence of eager thought,

earnest desire, active doing, or continual progress. Planning nothing, caring nothing, hoping nothing, doing nothing,—that all enters into his conception of Nirvana; and, should you tell him that *our* angels are tireless messengers of good who do the Almighty's will very swiftly, who revisit the world they once trod, where

“Thousands speed
O'er land and ocean without rest,”

he would ask for what atrocious sin they were condemned to the woe of everlasting activity, and never permitted to enter the Nirvana of doing nothing?

Now, this perfect similarity between the Hindu character and Hindu dreams of immortality is most readily explained by the effect of character on belief,—as a man *is*, so he thinketh,—and we shall be all the more convinced of the truth by noting how widely the Anglo-Saxon race differs from the Indian in its inner life, and how clearly marked is the corresponding difference in our dreams of immortality. For the Anglo-Saxon's ideal of happiness is not quiet contemplation, but busy acting. Nothing is so hard for him to do as to do nothing. His holidays are a weariness to his flesh, because cut off from usual forms of action; and throughout his school vacations, in early years, he vexes his mother's soul continually by asking what else there is for him to do. He must do his own dancing, singing, playing, and perform his own part on the dramatic stage, to get the full measure of manly enjoyment; and, because he carries the same spirit into all his religious conceptions, a heaven of utter rest is never recognized by him as a Paradise of God, unless

it be in moments of great exhaustion. His heaven is a state of untiring activity; and, as for his angels, are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of eternal life? Possibly there may have been a time when the average American Sunday-school talked of angels as passionless beings, floating about on clouds and playing harps; but, if so, the conception has faded so completely from our minds that there is doubtless not a single school where the popular theology is taught which does not repeat in some form, "There'll be something in heaven to do." For the inner life of the Anglo-Saxon race keeps shading more and more its Oriental creed, till at last the "*doing something*," which has long been the height of earthly enjoyment, has finally become the essential trait in its idea of eternal bliss in heaven; and what I wish you to observe is that the gulf between Hindu and Anglo-Saxon conceptions of immortality is exactly what you would have expected from knowing the two races, and computing the personal equation between them.

So, always, what there is in a man determines the kind and amount of truth he gains from what there is outside him. Mr. Beecher, in speaking of the Bible, says it has a different message to different classes of men. But what he thus says of these different classes applies also to our changing experiences and moods. The Bible is not to any one of us now just what it was a few years ago. A year hence, when new experiences have come to us, it will be a somewhat different book still. For, though the *printed words* are the same, *we* shall be different, and shall discern new meanings as

we turn the pages over. Only as we enter into sympathy with Christ's spirit shall we understand the story of his life, only as we come into spiritual resemblance with him shall we appreciate his best teaching. As the soldier best understands Cæsar or Napoleon, as the musician best comprehends Mozart or Beethoven, so a Christ-like soul finds most to admire and imitate in the gospel pages.

Hence, it is neither good eyesight nor long acquaintance with English, Greek, and Hebrew that will chiefly help us learn the spiritual lessons of the best of books, but our own inner selves ; and, as those selves differ, the lessons will differ too. It is possible for one to sink so low through self-indulgence that henceforth though having eyes he will see not and having ears he will hear not the things which pertain to God ; and so he may come to the divinest of services day after day and year after year, and carry no blessing away. And another shall come, who, by comparison with the first, seems very weak and ill-trained ; and yet, because of an eagerness of spirit which wishes to be led, he shall carry rich gifts away. The outreaching heart always touches God in the hour of its need ; while he who deliberately cherishes what is evil will grope in vain for the Almighty, though he is not far from any one of us. For, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

If I were preaching a sermon to parish ministers or members, instead of talking out aloud to fellow-students in theology, I might have a long and personal application to make of the truth and growth of a religious life. And I suppose that propriety admits, even if

duty does not demand, that when one is talking as man to man, even though it is about astronomical facts which lead to psychological truths and ethical suggestions, he should not shrink from following the theme into the highest realms of the spiritual life.

The greatest help we can receive in learning the truth comes from a pure religious character; and the better we make that character, the higher and deeper we can go in our religious striving. The more we do the will, the better we shall know the doctrine. So what was true eighteen hundred years ago — that the life was the light — is true now and forever; for if the life was the light centuries ago in old Judea, to the children of Israel, the life is the light to-day in America, to you and me and all men. There is no such new light to be gained on a darkened path as what comes from a better, holier life.

FUNERAL SERVICES.

[From the *Winchester Star*.]

THE funeral services of Rev. Richard Metcalf, for fifteen years the beloved and devoted pastor of the Winchester Unitarian Society, were held on Saturday, July 2d. The private service at his house, attended only by members of his family and near relatives, was conducted by Rev. Dr. Briggs, of Cambridge, with singing by members of the Sunday-school.

Public services were held in the Unitarian church at one o'clock. The pulpit and platform were beautifully adorned with flowers by a committee which has performed this office every Sunday since the church was built, and dedicated by its pastor to the "glad worship of God." There were no mourning emblems among the decorations, which expressed rather the love and gratitude of the congregation in memory of their pastor than their deep sorrow at his loss. The vacant chair behind the pulpit was garlanded with white roses, and a knot of pond lilies and smilax hung at the entrance to the "pastor's pew." On the wall of the alcove behind the pulpit was hung the motto, in green letters, and fringed with ferns, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

The bearers were the Standing-Committee of the Society; and, as they entered the church, carrying the coffin, the whole congregation rose, while Rev. C. A. Staples, standing in the pulpit, recited some passages from Scripture, and the organ played in a soft undertone. The coffin was placed in

front of the pulpit, and on it lay a wreath of pansies and climbing fern.

The services were as follows :—

Chant—"The Lord's Prayer," sung by four gentlemen of the parish.

Scripture Reading, by Rev. Mr. Staples.

Hymn—"He leadeth me," sung by Sunday-school.

Prayer, by Rev. Dr. Briggs.

Chant—"Thy will be done," sung by one class of the Sunday-school.

Address, by Rev. Dr. Briggs.

Hymn—"Father, whate'er of earthly bliss."

Poem, read by Dr. Winsor.

Hymn 137 in the Hymn Book—"Holy Spirit, source of gladness," read by Rev. Mr. Barber, of Somerville, and sung by the congregation.

Benediction, by Rev. Dr. Briggs.

The services were characterized by great simplicity and feeling, and seemed, to those who knew him, suited to the man whom they commemorated.

The address by Dr. Briggs was extemporaneous and, unfortunately, wholly unwritten, so that no adequate report of it can be given. It was a warm and eloquent and truthful tribute to the life and character of Mr. Metcalf; and, if some of his language might have seemed only eulogy to any stranger present, it was only simple truth to the hearts of his mourning people, who would find it hard to exaggerate their sense of their beloved pastor's value.

The poem read by Dr. Winsor, at the request of Mrs. Metcalf, was written on the death of Lady Augusta Stanley, wife of the Dean of Westminster Abbey, and seemed to express with singular fitness the feeling of Mr. Metcalf's parish and friends.

At the close of the services, the body was borne by the Standing-Committee to the vestibule; and there his people,

as they passed out, could look once more on the face they had loved so long. It was serenely beautiful, and left a blessing in death as it always bestowed one in life.

The place of burial was Wildwood Cemetery, on the slope of the hill, just south-east of the soldiers' monument. The day was very beautiful; and, to those who stood around that grave and heard the comforting words of Scripture, the encouraging hymn, "Give to the winds thy fears," and the last words of committal, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, but we know that the spirit has returned to rest with the God who gave it," it seemed that no more fitting resting-place could have been found for the body of one who so keenly loved the beauty of God's natural world as well as that of his spiritual world.

THE ladies of the society placed in the church a modest bronze tablet, bearing the following inscription:—

1866

IN MEMORY OF

1881

RICHARD METCALF,

FIRST PASTOR OF THIS SOCIETY,

AND IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

OF HIS HAPPY AND DEVOTED MINISTRY

OF FIFTEEN YEARS,

THIS TABLET IS PLACED

IN THE CHURCH WHICH HE DEDICATED

“TO THE GLAD WORSHIP OF GOD.”



Metcalfe, Richard, 1829-1881.
The abiding memory : sermons /

BX Metcalf, Richard, 1829-1881.
9843 The abiding memory : sermons / by Richard
M4 Metcalf ; with a brief memoir [by E.H.H]. --
A3 Boston : Ellis, 1883.
210p. ; 21cm.

1. Unitarian churches--Sermons. I. Title.

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